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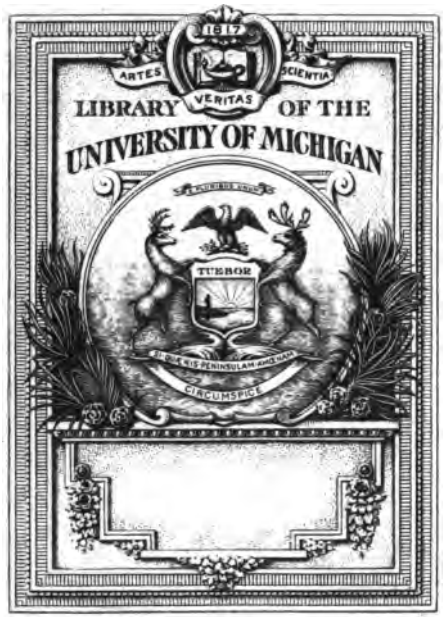

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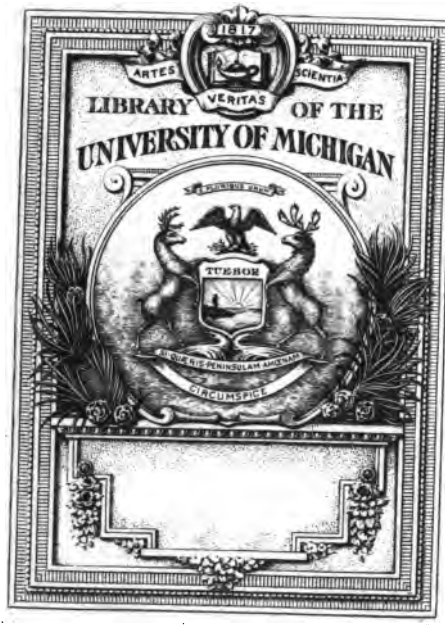

THE GIFT OF
Mr. & Mrs. R. E. Drake

"AM I TO CONSIDER YOU AS A PRISONER OF WAR OR AN ENEMY?"—*Frontispiece.*

UNIV.

SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION

For the Freedom of the Sea

A Romance of the War of 1812

BY

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

AUTHOR OF "FOR LOVE OF COUNTRY," ETC.

NEW YORK
INTERNATIONAL BOOK AND
PUBLISHING COMPANY
1900

This volume is issued for sale
in paper covers only

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Respectfully Dedicated

TO

WILLIAM T. SAMPSON,

A Rear Admiral in the Navy of the United States,

IN HEARTFELT APPRECIATION OF THE PROFOUND STRATEGY, BRILLIANT TACTICS, AND UNWEARIED VIGILANCE OF HIS GREAT CAMPAIGN IN THE WEST INDIES,

TO WHICH

HIS GLORIOUS VICTORY OF JULY 3, 1898, WAS A FITTING AND WELL-EARNED CULMINATION.

M.
Mr. & Mrs. Charles E Drake
4-29-42

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Book I

BROTHERS DIVIDED

For the Freedom of the Sea

CHAPTER I

The Beautiful Anne Fitzhugh

THE beautiful Anne Fitzhugh sprang from one of the proudest and oldest of those great Virginia families, whose achievements in the past had given that fair Commonwealth such remarkable pre-eminence in the small family of nations, which then made up the United States of America. The beautiful Anne Fitzhugh's pride in her ancestry was as great as her descent was long.

That they had been Tories in the Revolution in no way diminished her reverence for the name she bore. She even looked upon the warm friendship, which had subsisted between her father and a certain other great Virginian of so exalted a character that he had been chiefest in all the nation — and through whose paramount influence the family estates, somewhat diminished in extent and curtailed as to revenue, had been saved from confiscation, which was the American reward for unappreciated services to King George III. — as a blot on the scutcheon of the family history.

Everybody was astonished, therefore, when she married Mr. George Fairford of New York, since

he was nobody in particular — nothing but a gentleman — no ancestral estates, no ancient name, nothing but money! His father had been, or was, in trade! — think of it — a shopkeeper, or a merchant, or something of that sort, whose large means, at his only son's disposal, had permitted him to journey to the far land of Virginia, where he had the unspeakable audacity and unparalleled good luck to captivate the belle of the State, broad acres, ancient name, beauty, pride, — all there was, in fact.

The wedded life of the young couple, in the beautiful old place at Blakely, on the Chesapeake, the Fitzhugh place, of course, for the bride positively refused to live in Dutch and plebeian New York, passed pleasantly enough. Mr. Fairford was entirely conscious of the exalted station of the lady who had honored him, and indeed did not lack information on the subject, which was supplied by kindly disposed friends, as well as by the lady herself, when her pride got the better of her discretion, which was not infrequently. The situation had not yet become too entirely unbearable, however, when Providence, jealous of the honor of the Fitzhughs, it was believed, terminated a connection so damaging to their pride by removing the modest husband to that sphere where, since there is no giving in marriage there, he could scarcely hope by his fascinations to capture another Fitzhugh!

During their brief period of wedded life, Madam Fairford, née Fitzhugh, as she loved to subscribe herself to the end of her days, had magnificently borne a son to — well, to herself; an act, it was thought, of great condescension on her part to the

exigencies of family life. The young man inherited some of his mother's beauty, much of her unbending pride, and a little of the sternness of disposition which came from old Colonel John Parke, whose portrait in the hall, with its piercing blue eyes, had looked fiercely down upon many generations, which had lived and died since his day; he had also a touch of his father's sunny gentleness at times.

But it had not yet appeared what he should be, or what he might have become under the stern regimen of his proud and beautiful mother, who took herself and her family so seriously that, when a few years after Mr. Fairford's death she removed to England as the bride of another wanderer, — Sir James Heathcote of Heathcote Hall, in the county of Surrey, — she was not sure but that she had made another *mésalliance.*

"In Virginia," she was wont to say to her meek husband, "other people think it an honor to be shot dead by a Fitzhugh; we are not one of, but actually, *the first family of Virginia!* While you, sir, I find, are only a small country baronet of James the First's creation! Where I was born, I have been accustomed to precede every one, while here I must follow every red-faced country girl whose father happens to be a degree above you. 'T is a shame, Sir James, and I did not expect it." Alas, that not even the pride and glory of the Fitzhughs could break the Median laws of precedence!

Sir James happened, as had been her first incumbent, to be a gentleman (indeed, Mistress Fitzhugh could have married no other), and was of the same

modest, retiring disposition. He was not without a certain simple pride of birth of his own; but when he first mentioned, in his deprecating way, that his people had come over with William the Conqueror, Lady Anne crushed him with the stare she had inherited from Colonel Parke, and which generations of Fitzhughs had intensified until it was most disconcerting, indeed; and added a cutting remark about William the Conqueror being a most improper person, of no birth at all, scarcely to be named in the presence of a lady, etc. As another act of great condescension on her part, Lady Anne had borne another son to — well, to herself as before, and young Richard Heathcote inherited all of his mother's pride and none of his father's mildness.

Poor little Blakely Fitzhugh Fairford was left behind to the tender care of his mother's friends and relatives in Virginia when his mother followed — no, led Sir James back across the seas. He was thus early deprived of that love and care which even the sternest mother feels for her offspring, and which was lavished upon his more fortunate step-brother in Heathcote Hall in such measure that the fondest and most doting peasant woman could not have surpassed it in intensity and degree, while Blakely was more or less forgotten.

Seeing his mother and his brother, some three years younger than himself, at more and more infrequent intervals — in fact, Lady Anne's visits to the ancestral acres, which were the only occasions upon which she saw her son, gradually diminished, until they finally ceased altogether — the connection between mother and son was kept up by a yearly

letter, which grew more and more formal with each repetition. His mother's picture in miniature, however, hung in his room, and, in larger shape, looked down upon him from over the mantel in the dining-room; and the haughty beauty of the pictured face appealed to his artistic nature so strongly that, with it and the faint recollections of childhood, he created for himself an ideal mother, very far removed, indeed, from the real one, to which he gave all the devotion and love of his bereft little heart. A passion for this, his own creation, grew upon him until the lonely little boy developed into a man, when he clung to this semblance of family relationship left him like a ship to her anchor.

The Virginia estates were carefully managed for Lady Anne's benefit, and the revenue regularly sent to England, where, with prudent forethought, it was safely invested for young James' future benefit. Fairford did not suffer thereby, being in the enjoyment of a sufficient competence from the estate of his deceased grandfather, the New Yorker "in trade." He made his home in Virginia, when he was at home, with old Colonel Barrett, a distant connection of his mother, whose place adjoined her own. By profession he was a sailor, — an officer in the American Navy; he had been a midshipman under Truxton on the Constellation, getting his first taste of war when that fortunate ship defeated La Vengeance and L'Insurgente. Afterward, with Decatur at Tripoli, he had taken further lessons, and now was rated first lieutenant of the U. S. S. Constitution 44, Captain Isaac Hull, lazily swinging at her anchor in the deep water of the Chesapeake Bay, at

the foot of the hill opposite Blakely Hall and the Barrett place.

Singularly enough — and we can only account for it by pre-supposing a strain of roving blood in the Fitzhughs — one of them had been a pirate, a buccaneer, or, let us say as did the family, "a gentleman adventurer," in the old days when the risks were great, the takings many, and dead men told no tales on the Spanish main — Richard Heathcote was also a sailor; and, at present, third lieutenant of H. B. M. S. Guerrière 38, Captain James Richard Dacres, which, in company with H. B. M. S. Lion 50, Captain Henry Cunningham, was moored not far from the Constitution on this gentle spring evening, in the year of grace, 1812.

The three ships had been anchored near each other for some days past, and there had been much visiting among the officers. Fairford had warmly welcomed his brother to Virginia, and the ties of relationship between them had made the transition from acquaintanceship to affection an easy one; though the feeling upon Fairford's part was deeper than upon that of Heathcote, as was natural, since the one was practically motherless, and the other rejoiced in home affections of the deepest kind.

There had been rumors of war, and two partial engagements, at least, had occurred between ships of the two countries; and, while there had, as yet, been no open rupture or declaration of war, the feeling of the Americans had been so strained that it was only a question of days until the breaking point would be reached. The high-handed arrogance of the British Navy, the cruisers of which stopped

peaceful American trading ships on the high seas when and where it was convenient to them, sometimes violating our harbors for the same purpose, and took from them such men for their service as pleased them, under the plea that they were deserters or British subjects, or what you will — without any plea at all, in fact — had awakened such a feeling of rage and indignation that, when the various conciliar acts, necessitated by the greater wars which England was conducting with her great Continental rival, were brought into operation, the end was certain.

The claim of perpetuity of dominion over a citizen, which implied that no man could change his domicile, nor renounce his allegiance, nor become a citizen of another country, was one which could be maintained only by force of arms, not of right. England found it most difficult to maintain and man that immense and most efficient navy, which, after all is said and done, was the great bulwark of liberty, and insured the final triumph of democracy over imperialism as the principle of government, during the earlier years of the century. This was a sufficient cause for English statesmen and administrators to disregard the rights of individual men and institute the odious press gang. They were compelled to maintain discipline in their ships by the frightful methods of punishment in vogue, and to use American ships as recruiting stations. Naturally this did not avail to excuse their conduct from an American point of view.

Between the Berlin Decrees of the French Emperor, and the Orders in Council of Great Britain, the commerce of the United States, upon

which the prosperity of the nation at that time depended, was practically at an end. When the British openly disregarded the protection which should be given by the flag on the ocean, looking at the Atlantic as they did the Mediterranean, "as a British lake," it was high time to strike. Indeed, it was strike or die; many people said strike and die; in either event action was imperative and necessary, and national death preferable to a further submission to the British claims. When the American flag no longer protected American citizens on shipboard, or wherever it floated above them, the blow must be struck, and struck hard for the freedom of the sea.

In view of these things, Sir James Heathcote, accompanied by a distant connection of his, Miss Evelyn Heathcote, having left his wife, who became more and more English, though not less of a Fitzhugh, with each succeeding year, at home, came over to Virginia to look after the ancestral estates. If possible, he hoped to make some permanent arrangement for their safe-keeping during the coming and inevitable war. Sir James and Evelyn were the guests of Colonel Barrett and his daughter Margaret for the time being, and a delightful friendship had sprung up between the two young girls. On the evening in which this story opens, the captains of the Constitution and the Guerrière, Captain Cunningham being indisposed, with Fairford, Heathcote, and such other of their higher officers as could be spared from their duties, and several officers of the American Navy, were dining at the Hall, preparatory to a ball to be given after supper.

CHAPTER II

A Wager of Battle

SUPPER was over, the sun was not yet set, and all the members of the house party were out of doors in the pleasant evening weather. Old Colonel Barrett, a soldier of the Revolution, and Sir James Heathcote, engaged in earnest conversation, were sitting near the end of the long, lofty porch, which extended across the front of the building, and rose to the height of the roof.

Two officers, one a very tall, thin, melancholy looking man, in the uniform of the British Navy, the other wearing an American Naval uniform, and as short and stout as his companion was long and slender, were walking slowly down the gravelled walk toward a little pleasure-house, which stood just on the edge of the high bluff overlooking the bay.

In the doorway the two young girls were standing, and surrounding them, a group of young officers, all, apparently, in eager rivalry for the favors of the fair. In a grove near the house, and just on the brow of the hill, the white tents of a battery of artillery and a battalion of infantry, which had encamped there for the night, while en route to Washington, the capital, gleamed under the trees, and the bright uniforms of the men as they lounged on the out-

skirts of the camp, gazing at the occupants of the Hall, gave a dash of vivid color to the scene.

The two naval officers stopped at the summer-house, and looked down upon the three ships below them. A pretty picture they made, — the white decks; the rows of spotless hammocks; the grim, black guns; the lofty spars, with their tightly and neatly furled sails; the seamen lounging about the deck after supper, for it was the second dog watch, one of Jack's infrequent hours of play. The short man broke the silence.

"I tell you, Dacres, it 's got to stop."

"My dear Hull," replied the other, "I don't see how it can."

"It can and shall."

"But how? A British sailor is a British sailor wherever he goes and whatever he does; once a subject of King George, always one, you know."

"No, I don't know — not when he goes as an American citizen under that flag. Besides, you have taken anybody you wanted. I know there are Americans on your ships down here."

"Oh, come now, Hull."

"I tell you again, Captain Dacres, I know it. We have stood this thing long enough, and, if I know the temper of our people, it 's got to stop, or something will come of it. I don't hesitate to say that I 'd rather sink alongside you than give up a man to any demand you fellows might make. I would not care of what nationality he was."

"My dear fellow," replied Captain Dacres, smiling imperturbably, "we disagree, I see. Well, if anything is coming, let it come. I fancy we shall

be ready for it. If you won't give up our men, why, then we shall have to take them, that 's all."

"They 're not your men; but if they were, I would not give them up as long as I commanded a ship."

"Oh, well, there are the points of difference. We must have men, and, as long as you have them, we will take them. Why, how could you help yourself?" went on the Englishman, calmly. "Suppose, for instance, you met the Guerrière. I could take you in half an hour; knock that bundle of pine boards of yours to pieces in less time, possibly."

"Captain Dacres, you insult me," exclaimed the stout, choleric American, his face flushing deeply at this nonchalant and certainly aggravating remark. His hand played ominously with his sword for a moment, but his face gradually cleared as Dacres explained, urbanely, —

"My dear Captain Hull, I mean no insult, and cry you pardon if one is conveyed in my words. I am only stating facts. We could knock you into a cocked hat, you know."

"I 'll bet you a cocked hat you don't, Dacres; and, if I don't finish you up in thirty minutes myself, I 'll give you two cocked hats instead of one," said Hull, smiling.

"Done; but I ought to give you odds, I think, to be perfectly fair."

"Never mind the odds, or, if you think best, I will give them to you; mine is the heavier ship, you know."

"That only makes us even; mine is an English ship."

"And mine an American."

"Dash it all, that's why I wanted to give you odds."

"And that is why I shall feel uncomfortable about taking your cocked hat, Dacres."

"Well, well, wait until you get it, my friend; meanwhile, we won't quarrel ourselves about it, but fight it out when the war begins."

"And begin it will unless you stop," replied Captain Hull.

"And stop we won't."

"There, you see, we begin our discussion all over."

"Let us drop it, then," said Captain Dacres; "we can't agree."

"Very well," was the reply. "There is only one way to settle it, and that is with the ships side by side — and then God guard the right."

"Amen," said the Englishman, solemnly; "we, at least, will remain friends."

"Ay, surely," replied Hull, frankly; "my father fought against England in the Revolution, and died in the prison ship Jersey in Wallabout Bay."

"And mine commanded a schooner in the naval battle on Lake Champlain, in the same war, and died a Vice-Admiral of the Red a few years since."

"I am sorry he did not transmit a better opinion of us to his son."

"Ah, well, my friend, all you lack is experience; when you have been fighting the Dutch, the French, the Spanish, the whole world, even," continued Dacres, proudly, "as long as we have, you'll get that experience."

"We'll get all we need from you, Dacres," replied Hull, bluntly.

"You will find us anxious and willing to give it to you, I 'm sure," said Dacres.

"And don't forget the hat."

"Not I, for I count upon wearing it — but it has grown late; let us go into the house; I see the guests of the evening are arriving."

Arm in arm the two men turned toward the Hall.

CHAPTER III

The First Waltz in America

DURING the conversation between the two captains, the lingering twilight had faded into darkness. The Virginians of that day kept early hours, and for some time past a stream of carriages from the neighboring country seats had each been discharging, before the wide entrance, its load of ladies fair, their attendant cavaliers for the most part arriving on horseback. After laying aside their wrappings, the guests, with whom the two officers mingled, were received in the great drawing-room by Colonel Barrett and his daughter Margaret, assisted by Evelyn Heathcote.

The two girls made a pretty picture as they stood together under a brilliantly-lighted chandelier at the end of the long room. Evelyn Heathcote was cast in a rather large mould, tall, stately and imposing in her presence, with a nobility of carriage and of feature that impressed the most casual observer. Like most of the daughters of England, her complexion was fair, and her abundant hair had that glint of sunshine in its meshes by which a compensating nature strives to lighten the dull air of the foggy little island; and her eyes were as blue as the sea which washes its shores. Upon her usually pale, calm face, the excitement of the evening and

a defection on the part of an hitherto devoted cavalier, Lieutenant Richard Heathcote, which her keen eye had speedily become aware of, had brought a delicate play of color to her cheek, which put to blush the pink roses she wore at her breast, and which not even the gentle gale from the tiny fan she carried could dispel.

She was dressed in a short-waisted gown of pale blue, made after the fashion called Empire, a fashion imported from France; there were straps of pearl passementerie drawn across the breast, and the dress was cut very *décolleté*, disclosing a pair of snowy shoulders; a broad panel of the same pearl trimming fell from the short waist to the hem of the gown. Her hands and arms were covered with long white wrinkled gloves; her hair was dressed *à la Grecque* with a large knot, into which a bunch of white ostrich tips had been thrust, with numbers of curls falling on either side of her face; on her feet she wore pink satin shoes with ties crossed over the instep and white silk stockings, which the dress, cut rather short before, though trailing a little behind, plainly exposed. In short, she represented the extreme of the mode of the period; and at Almack's they used to say there was not a better gowned nor a better looking woman in all England than Evelyn Heathcote.

Greater contrast could not be imagined than that presented by the two girls, for Margaret Barrett, a year or two younger than her friend, was as small and dark as the other was tall and fair. Her hair, which she of course wore in the all-prevailing Greek knot with two coquettish and fascinating little curls

over her ears, and otherwise dressed low on her pretty forehead, was of a dark chestnut color; her complexion was of that rich olive tint so rarely seen in its perfection, which bespeaks the ardent kisses of tropic suns through generations of ancestors; the prevailing tint of her large, expressive eyes was hazel, sometimes lightening into a shadowy gray, sometimes darkening into a bluish black. Sometimes they dreamed, sometimes they glistened with limpid light, sometimes they filled with tears, sometimes they flashed with fire, according to her varying moods.

She had a smiling and most kissable mouth, the red lips shaped like a Cupid's bow, a nose very slightly *retroussé*, and a merry piquant coquettish expression suited to her slender and graceful figure.

She was simply gowned in white, and wore no gloves; the modestly cut neck and half-open sleeves of her dress permitted glimpses of a pair of round brown arms and youthful shoulders, charming in their immaturity and innocence. Slippers of pale blue with ties crossed over pale pink stockings covered her dainty feet. Instead of a fan, she carried a bunch of deep red roses, one of which nestled in the midnight of her hair. Unlike her majestic friend, all her movements lacked the repose of majesty, and were quick, active, and full of life and nervous energy. Evelyn was a girl to love and admire; Margaret was one to live and die for.

Though the tendency to brilliancy in the masculine dress had been somewhat modified by the introduction of less extravagant fashions than those of the past, the extent of the change was not yet great,

and men still expressed their fancy in the choice of their attire. Silk, satin, brocade, and vivid color had not yet become the exclusive property of the women. Colonel Barrett, for instance, clung to the fashion of the not distant Revolutionary days, and appeared in all the glory of powdered hair, immense ruffled tie, satin coat, waistcoat and knee breeches, with silk stockings, diamond buckles, court sword, and so forth.

The naval officers wore their uniforms — ruffled shirts, blue coats heavily laced on the breast, collar and cuffs with gold, one or two brilliant gold epaulets, according to their rank, white or red waistcoats, as they were Americans or English. They carried cocked hats under the arm, wore swords at the side, tight-fitting ankle trousers and tasselled half boots for the Americans, and knee breeches, silk stockings and pumps for the English.

Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott and his officers were arrayed in the rich blue uniform of the Artillery Corps, trimmed with gold lace, with white crossed belts on the breast, black stock, high riding boots, immense chapeau with plume, eagle and cockade.

Major Hugh Brady and his Infantry officers wore a similar uniform, but laced with silver, and each carried a polished leather shako with white pompon, and wore high leather gaiters instead of boots. The American Marine officers were in green uniforms, faced with white, and the British were in brilliant scarlet.

The civilians wore high white stocks, with broad, full cravats and ruffled shirts; long skirted coats,

with high rolling collars, of blue, green, brown, red, white, or any other color; with low fancy waistcoats, heavy watch fobs, tight knee breeches and boots, or long tight-fitting trousers tied at the ankle; with slippers and rosettes on their feet. The ball-room, therefore, lighted by hundreds of wax candles in chandelier, sconces and candelabra, presented a brilliant picture of moving color, the like of which we no longer see.

It was a day in which old-fashioned ceremony and courtesy had not been displaced by new-fashioned indifference. The gentle art of courtseying was still as much a part of a young lady's education as were reading, writing and ciphering. So there was much elaboration and form in the welcoming of the guests before the opening of the ball, and a degree of stiffness in the party which was not removed until the coming of the negro fiddlers, slaves on the plantation, who furnished the humble orchestra for the prospective gayety.

Then the dance began, and contra-dance, reel and jig succeeded each other in pleasant succession. For those who did not dance there were card-tables provided in appointed rooms of the great house, which were much sought after by the elder men and the dowagers; and the great buffet and the tables in the dining-room were loaded with the substantial eatables and drinkables of those days.

Among the most indefatigable of the dancers was Lieutenant Heathcote, and the principal object of his attention during the evening was the fair hostess herself. It was remarked by many, and by none more forcibly than by Lieutenant Fairford, that she

seemed in no wise averse to accepting the attentions of the handsome Englishman, and it was not until the evening was far advanced that Fairford found himself able to secure the attention of his lovely cousin. Taking her hand with the old-fashioned grace of his ancestry, he led her out of the hall toward the little summer-house at the end of the wharf. His outward manner was gracious, but his inward feelings were quite the reverse.

While he had not exactly grown up with Margaret, on account of the long absences necessitated by his cruises in distant seas, he had been at home at regularly recurring intervals of two or three years, and the affection with which, as a boy, he had regarded the tried little comrade and merry-hearted companion of his childhood had unconsciously and insensibly deepened, until it had become the all-absorbing passion of his whole nature. It had required, however, just the stimulus which the evident appreciation exhibited by his step-brother for his cousin supplied, to discover to him the full depth and intensity of his love; and that which had hitherto smouldered little heeded, suddenly broke into flame. He was a modest man, however, and, as he had never spoken to Margaret on this subject, he had no assurance upon which to found that airy structure of happiness and hope which lovers build, and it was with much trepidation and great misgiving that he spoke that night.

As to Margaret herself, the thought of Blakely Fairford as a lover had never entered her head, though Destiny, under whose leading we walk as children, had been unconsciously directing her foot-

steps in the same pathway her lover trod. When Fairford spoke to her that night therefore, her heart, under the influence of his sweet pleading, opened before her own vision as the morning glory whose vines twined around the summer-house in which they stood, opened before the touch of the rising sun. The feeling of open admiration with which she had enjoyed the comradeship of the debonair young Englishman was lost in the depth of a newer and truer emotion. However, and I grieve to say it, Margaret was not only witty and wise and gay, but she was a natural coquette of the most finished type as well; and that tendency, coupled with her surprise at the sudden and overwhelming revelation not only of Fairford's feeling, but of her own, moved her to simulate an indifference she did not feel.

So, when Fairford told her how he loved her, she laughed. When he begged her not to dance with his brother again, when he asked for a kiss, which she would have freely given him that very morning as a sister might, when he pleaded for a rose from those which she held in her hand, she put him off with smiles and jests.

But when the old Fitzhugh temper rose to the surface in him and he grew angry and imperious, demanding, when he should have continued to plead, she became as hard as a struck flint, and matched the blows of his pride by returning flashes of fire, until, within open rupture, and with a bitter feeling, the two who loved each other walked back to the house at odds. If Margaret had been beautiful before, she surpassed herself now; and the color in

her cheeks rivalled that of the rose which she waved airily in the direction of Heathcote as she entered, while Fairford, gloomy and furious, remained behind in the doorway. She accepted an invitation for a reel from Heathcote at once, very much to the discomfiture and indignation of Miss Evelyn, and that completed the breach. Fairford, naturally, and with a quick appreciation that it might not be pleasant to his brother, consoled himself by dancing attendance upon Evelyn Heathcote, whom he really liked extremely, and who, piqued at the desertion of her cousin Richard, whom she had always considered her own private property, was in nowise loath to accept the attentions of so dashing a cavalier as the American. Thus, of the characters in this story, three, in the midst of merriment, were breaking their hearts needlessly, while the cause of all the trouble, save for some uneasiness at Evelyn's apparent acquiescence in the situation, thoroughly enjoyed it all.

Toward the close of the evening, during a cessation of the dances, Heathcote proposed to Margaret that he should teach her a new dance, lately introduced into England, and of which none of the Americans had ever heard, called the waltz. Margaret, ignorant of the character of the dance, and happening to catch a particularly stern glance from the jealous Fairford at the moment, readily acquiesced, and gave strict attention while Heathcote showed her the steps.

"Oh, don't let her dance it," whispered Evelyn to Fairford. "It is really not the thing at all; 't is much condemned in England and . . ."

"She may do what she pleases for aught I care," he answered recklessly.

"But you don't understand," she continued quickly. "He has to take her in his arms and . . . do interfere."

"It will be useless, you will see; but I will try," he answered, stepping forward to where Margaret stood watching Heathcote humming the air and exhibiting the step.

"I think I understand how it is done," she said, smiling. "So," taking her skirts in her hand and making the turn gracefully.

"Splendid! Splendid!" cried Heathcote, amid a murmur of applause from the other guests, who had gathered about them. "Who will play for us? Evelyn, you?"

She shook her head, and Fairford said, —

"Margaret, don't dance this, I beg of you. I am informed that . . . that . . ." he hesitated, not liking openly to affront his brother, who was, in a certain sense, his guest.

"Have a care, Fairford," responded that gentleman, smiling, but with a menacing ring in his voice; "if you wish to play master of the revels, you will have to wear a more smiling face; besides, Miss Barrett has promised to dance this with me."

"Margaret, I must request you," continued Fairford, in his most imperious manner, his face flushing.

"Since when have you assumed the position of arbiter of the dance?" she interrupted, smiling defiantly, her eyes shining, her face full of color. "You forget this is not the quarter-deck of your

ship, sir; I dance this with Lieutenant Heathcote, as I promised."

"As you please, Mistress Barrett," returned Fairford at this, while he bowed and retreated.

"Who can play the measure?" cried Heathcote, gaily, enjoying his triumph. "You can, Howard? Sit down, then, at this harpsichord. Now, Madam," he cried, as the first few bars of the slow, dreamy *trois temps*, the original waltz, floated through the room. Then, stepping forward, to her great surprise, he slipped an arm around her waist, and, before she knew it, whirled her away in what was probably the first waltz ever danced on the American continent.

For a moment she struggled to break away, and then, catching sight of Fairford's gloomy face, convulsed with rage and jealousy, she abandoned herself to the fascinating motion. Though her partner held her at arm's length, barely touching her, a wave of horrified indignation swept over the people in the ball-room, and they were by no means Puritans, either. Such a shocking thing had never been seen or heard of before; actually, she was being pulled around in his arms; shades of her ancestors! A perfect storm of disapproval rose in feminine breasts, while envy filled the souls of the young men. A moment more and Margaret had lost caste forever; and what might have broken forth no one can tell, when the voice of Colonel Barrett, who had just come in from the card-room, stopped the guilty pair, and rescued his daughter from the consequences of her reckless behavior before it was too late.

"My daughter," he said, with perfect courtesy, and yet with crushing disapproval, "if you will honor me, and enough others can be found to follow our example, we will, in the *menuet de la cour*, show the thoughtless and foolish present with what dignity and grace the dances of the past were carried on."

"A rose in memory of this," whispered Heathcote to his fair partner. Carelessly dropping one from the bunch at his feet, with a heightened color and an angry heart, for certainly she had represented, if any one did, the "thoughtless and foolish present," at the subtle, though delicate reproof of her father, anger, which vented itself upon the innocent Fairford chiefly, with the unreasoning tendency of angry womanhood, she returned her father's stately bow with a deep courtesy, and, in company with the others, reverted to the past in the minuet. Shortly after this, as it was long past the usual retiring hour even for balls, the party broke up. Those who lived near by returned home; others of the ladies sought their apartments for the night, while the gentlemen adjourned to the billiard-room and dining-room.

CHAPTER IV

The Unfinished Duel

WHEN the young men congregated in the dining-room, cards were produced, and the play became fast and furious there. The wine, which had been rather sparingly used heretofore, out of deference to the ladies, flowed freely. Those who did not play — including Fairford and Heathcote — engaged in conversation, and the subject under discussion was, of course, the burning question of the hour — the impossible claims of England on the high seas, and the position the United States would take thereupon.

An acrid tone soon pervaded the conversation; and, under the stimulus of the wine he had taken, Lieutenant Heathcote assumed a leading, and, unfortunately, an offensive part. The laws of courtesy were more or less forgotten.

"What chance have you against the British Navy with your old frigates? They are nothing but pine boards after all."

"You will find that pine is a stronger wood than you think for, Richard," replied Fairford, quietly, but with his eyes blazing.

"Oh, shall we?" sneered Heathcote; "what 's the odds if we do? We have over a thousand ships and you less than twenty. We will run that prison-

striped flag of yours off the ocean," he concluded. There were cries of "Shame! Shame!" from the little group of Americans, and even some of Heathcote's brother officers attempted to remonstrate with him.

"Oh, come now, Heathcote, this is too much," said Howard, first lieutenant of the Lion. "Remember where you are, man."

"I know where I am," was the answer. "Let me alone, will you? Once an Englishman, always one, that's our creed; a man who once belongs to King George belongs to him forever. We'll take him and keep him wherever we find him, — on the high seas, — on the decks of your ships . . . where you will. What are you going to do about it?" he continued hotly; "how are you going to help it, pray? I will wager I can take a sloop-of-war and capture any frigate you have, in spite of your dirty little flag."

"I am the senior American Naval officer present," responded Fairford, fiercely. "I demand that you apologize at once for your insult to the flag."

"Apologize be d—d," returned Heathcote, with equal fierceness. "We'll not only take the men, but" — and he smiled mockingly as he drew a red rose from his breast; "we'll take the women, too."

His tone and manner were particularly offensive.

Fairford, with upraised hand, sprang at him at once; but others quickly intervened, and the blow fell upon the empty air.

"This is an insult which can only be wiped out in one way," he cried furiously.

"Quite so," replied Heathcote, with equal spirit. "When and where you please."

"I am ready now," answered Fairford, striving to recover his composure.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said one of the older officers — "between brothers . . ."

"No more brothers than Englishmen and Americans are," broke in Lieutenant Colonel Scott, fiercely.

"The observation of the gentleman is most accurate," answered Heathcote, smoothly, beginning to get the better of the wine he had taken, as the emergency deepened. "Being of this mind, and having obtruded his large personality into this quarrel, perhaps he is willing to bear the consequences of his interference."

"With the greatest pleasure, sir," answered Scott, "if there are any effective possibilities left in you when Mr. Fairford has finished with you."

"The gentleman does me too much honor; he would make an excellent target. If it were not so manifestly unfair to him, I would suggest cannon at long range."

Deeply enraged at the reference to his great size, the hot-tempered Scott stepped toward the Englishman, whose slender figure looked small, indeed, beside his huge American antagonist. Heathcote had all the courage and pride of his race and nation, and he faced his enemy with magnificent calmness.

"Have patience, my great sir, and you may get as near to me as you wish in your turn."

"Hold on, Scott," said his friend, Major Brady of the Infantry, restraining him with a powerful

grasp. "It's not your turn yet; and you, sir," addressing Heathcote, "if this is going to be a tournament, I hope you won't omit the Infantry from your entertainment."

"An Irishman is always ready to fight in anybody's quarrel but his own; you shall follow your two friends, sir."

"Faith, I wish I had a better chance of getting into action, then."

"Don't despair, sir, I beg of you. Is there any one else . . . the gentleman in green? We have the Navy, the Artillery, and the Infantry; we can complete the service if he will represent the Cavalry, say the Horse Marines?" continued Heathcote, smiling and sneering.

"I am accustomed to be addressed in a proper manner by those whom I desire to kill; but I will waive my right in this instance, and give you an opportunity, if, after all, you desire it," intrepidly replied Captain Bush of the Marine Corps, as brave an officer as ever drew a sword.

"Sir, I thank you; I do desire it. What next?" said Heathcote, bowing gracefully.

"Let us proceed to business if your engagement book is sufficiently well filled for your purpose," answered Fairford.

"If you wish to make a general affair of this, Heathcote, and intend challenging the whole United States, why not select three of us to accompany you and settle the thing at once? I shall be glad to be one. I don't like this procession of yours," said one of the English officers.

"No," said Heathcote, promptly, "this is my

affair; one Englishman should be a match for any four Americans; it is odds to which we are accustomed; let no one interfere with me, and we will begin immediately."

"Would it not be better to wait until morning instead of showing such unseemly haste to conclude this unfortunate affair?" commented one of the American officers, Robert Ludlow, third lieutenant of the Constitution, a great friend of Fairford, and a great admirer of Evelyn Heathcote as well.

"I should be most happy to oblige you," responded Heathcote; "but, unfortunately, we are under orders to sail early in the morning, and we shall have to conclude the affair at once, or postpone it to a more distant day."

"The sooner the better," replied Fairford; "I believe that I have already expressed my desire to settle the matter at once. If I am not mistaken, you will find the colonel's duelling pistols in the cabinet there. Lieutenant Ludlow will act for me —"

"And Lieutenant Howard for me," continued Heathcote, quickly. "Dr. St. George of the Guerrière is present, and he will do whatever may be necessary, I am sure; so we are provided for all contingencies."

The three gentlemen named bowed and withdrew to one side for a short consultation, taking the colonel's pistols with them. The other officers and men gathered themselves together at the other side of the room, in a small alcove, leaving the two brothers alone in the centre.

With a smile of haughty indifference, Heathcote

weapons toward Heathcote, who carelessly took the nearest one. Fairford received the other.

"As there is no difference in position on account of the light, which I will hold, myself, where I now stand, the other lights in the room being extinguished, Lieutenant Heathcote will stand where he now is, and Lieutenant Fairford will stand here," he continued, after he had carefully walked ten paces from the former.

"Take your places, gentlemen. I presume it is unnecessary to state to the other gentlemen that they must remain absolutely quiet. Now, Lieutenant Ludlow, will you give the word?"

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" said the latter.

"One moment," said Fairford, quietly, in the intense silence; "I desire to say that I have already used this pistol, and this may give me some advantage." Ludlow turned toward Howard, who looked toward Heathcote.

"It is of no consequence whatever," replied that officer, carelessly. "Proceed."

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" said Ludlow again; and when Fairford, stern and cold, and Heathcote, smiling and gay, had nodded acquiescence, he began to count in a stillness which was absolutely breathless.

"One, two —" Both men, with arms steady from long practice, raised their pistols simultaneously, and each took careful aim at the other.

Back of Heathcote, over the mantel hung the picture of a proudly beautiful woman. Though the two antagonists facing each other were totally different types of men, Fairford being fair, tall, broad-

"ARE YOU READY, GENTLEMEN?"—*Page* 34.

shouldered and strong, while Heathcote, though as tall as his brother, was dark and slender, there was a curious likeness in the face of each man to the face in the picture. Some trick of carriage, a pride of port, the poise of the head, the piercing glance of the strong gray eyes, which they all three had in common, proclaimed that she was the mother of both.

As Ludlow counted three, Fairford's glance, for a flying moment, comprehended both the face in the picture and the face of his brother.

His brother! Good God, what were they about to do?

He started slightly, and then the enormity of the situation burst upon him. Was it too late? He had half opened his mouth to speak, when the ominous word "fire" fell upon his ear! Then he held himself as steady as a rock, mechanically glancing along the barrel of his pistol. A sharp report rang through the room. He heard the whistle of a bullet pass his ear, heard the crash of breaking glass behind him; he felt a slight tug at the side of his head.

When the smoke had cleared away, he found himself entirely unharmed, confronting his defenceless brother. Heathcote, his discharged pistol hanging by his side, was bravely facing him; his face was a trifle paler than before, but he was still serenely smiling. He, too, had had his moment of realization; it had come as he had pressed the trigger, and had unconsciously deflected his hand. "Thank God!" he whispered to himself, "he is unharmed." Fairford, nerving himself, and seeking to silence

his conscience, took long and careful aim, while the others waited in breathless silence to see the result of the expected shot. Presently, to everybody's great surprise, he slowly lowered his arm. There was an instant murmur from the group of men in the alcove.

"I must ask," cried Lieutenant Howard to Lieutenant Ludlow, "that your principal take his shot at once. Such a proceeding as this is most unusual."

"Heave ahead, Fairford, why do you delay?" answered Ludlow, promptly; "there are others here who must be considered."

"Let the gentleman take his time, Howard, I can wait," said Heathcote, urbanely.

"Enough of this," interjected Fairford; "I refuse to continue. I cannot fire at a defenceless man who looks at me with my mother's eyes. The matter can go no further. He is my brother, and cannot insult me." He threw the pistol on the table, and folded his arms.

"I say you shall fire," responded Heathcote, starting forward eagerly. "By heaven, you humiliate me beyond expression. No man shall receive my shot without returning it."

"I cannot and will not," answered Fairford. "You may say and do what you please, you are my brother and I cannot forget it."

"You shall, you must. Blake," responded Heathcote, sternly, though using the familiar name, "you cannot put this disgrace upon me. How can I oblige these other gentlemen if I allow this matter to end in this way? Do not put this shame upon me," he cried, seizing the pistol at the same time,

and trying to force it into Fairford's unwilling hand. "Brother, for the sake of my honor, take the shot. Gentlemen, I appeal to you," he said, turning to the two seconds, as Fairford still shook his head.

"The laws of honor certainly demand that he take his shot," said Howard. "You agree with me, do you not, Mr. Ludlow?"

"Certainly, you must do it, Fairford," said Ludlow, immediately.

"And I tell you now the laws of nature and the laws of God —" began Fairford, firmly.

"And to you, gentlemen, I appeal," said Heathcote, interrupting again, and turning to the spectators, "we are not dealing with laws other than those of honor now. Give your voice."

"Take the shot —"

"Give him his shot" —

"It is a shame to refuse," cried the others, their angry passions in the ascendant.

"I want none of my brother's blood upon my hands, and I will not, as I have said before, continue this affair," returned Fairford, inflexibly. "You have abundant evidence of Lieutenant Heathcote's courage in his gallant action here, and, if any other gentleman doubts his or mine, I shall be most happy to accommodate him at once and promise no interruptions."

"May I ask," said Lieutenant Colonel Scott, suavely, "in what situation this leaves me with regard to my unfulfilled engagement with Lieutenant Heathcote?"

"And what is my position?" brusquely added Major Brady.

"And mine?" chimed in Captain Bush.

"In no position at all, gentlemen; the affair is ended. This is not the place where the question of efficiency and superiority, which has been raised by my English brother, can be settled. We will fight it out on the decks of our ships, and on the field of battle, where, I doubt not, ample opportunity will be afforded for the exhibition of that courage which is the common heritage of the descendants of the Anglo-Saxon."

"And of the Celt as well," interrupted Brady, impulsively.

"I hope Lieutenant Fairford will not discriminate against the Germans, from whom I sprang," said Captain Bush.

"Certainly not, gentlemen, certainly not. That courage which is the common heritage of every man, I should have said."

"Oh, Blake, you have undone me," said Heathcote, bitterly, still unconvinced.

"Not so, Richard, for —"

At this juncture the door of the room opened, and Colonel Barrett, Sir James, Captains Hull and Dacres, and the older members of the party entered.

CHAPTER V

Colonel Barrett Asks Questions

"GENTLEMEN, gentlemen," said Colonel Barrett, sniffing the powder smoke, and seeing from the broken glass behind Fairford, and the general disorder in the room, what had happened. "How is this; have you been fighting in my house; violating my hospitality by engaging in a duel under my roof?"

"If it was one of my men, I will engage it was not without cause that he entered into the matter," said Hull, calmly.

"I will engage the same thing of mine," answered Dacres, passionately, his dark face flushing.

"Lieutenant Colonel Scott," continued Colonel Barrett, unheeding this interruption, "will you have the goodness to advise me . . . ." but he was interrupted once more — this time by the faint sound of the roll of a drum heard from the outside in the still night. All the officers started simultaneously. It was the beat to quarters, and Hull exclaimed under his breath, "That is the Constitution surely."

The old colonel, however, kept on imperturbably: "Will you tell me what is the cause of whatever action has been taken on this occasion, and give me information as to the details of this scene?"

Scott hesitated, looking about the room inquiringly.

"Out with it, man," exclaimed Hull. "If there has been any fighting, we want to know what it was about, and if there is going to be any more we want to take a hand in it. I trust I voice your sentiments, Captain Dacres?"

"Completely," replied the Englishman, proudly. "Pray give us the details, Colonel Scott."

"Have I your permission, gentlemen?" asked Scott, looking around at the principals and seconds.

"Yes, yes."

"Go on, go on," was the reply from all parts of the room. It was noticed that the Englishmen had withdrawn to one side and arranged themselves about Captain Dacres, while the American sailors had assembled near Captain Hull, leaving Scott, Brady, and their officers, and the other guests facing Colonel Barrett in the middle of the room between the two parties.

"The question, sir," said Scott, gravely, "was the old and open one of the right of His Britannic Majesty's ships to search our ships, impress our men, and insult our flag, with a secondary question of the efficiency of our Navy."

"By gad, I will wager they will find out that neither of these is an open question very shortly," interrupted Brady, fiercely. Hull and his officers smiled at the impetuous Irishman, while the English officers laughed scornfully.

"Silence, sir," commanded Colonel Barrett; "do you wish to precipitate another quarrel? Proceed."

"That is all, sir. We resented both the statement and the manner of its presentation, and Lieutenant

Fairford, Major Brady, Captain Bush and myself took the matter up."

"Who were your antagonists?" said the colonel.

"We had one only, Lieutenant Heathcote."

"What! were you all going to fight him?" demanded the astonished colonel.

"Yes, sir, but in succession."

"Well done, Dick," said old Sir James approvingly to his son.

"I must beg that I be not interrupted again. Go on, Colonel Scott," said Colonel Barrett, impressively.

"Well, sir, Mr. Fairford was to have the first chance at the man. He received his broth — Lieutenant Heathcote's fire unharmed, and then threw down his pistol and refused to take his shot, saying that he could not fire at a man who looked at him with his mother's eyes. That was your phrase, was it not?" said the tall artilleryman, bowing toward Lieutenant Fairford.

"It was, sir," was the response.

"Gentlemen, I call you to witness," interrupted Heathcote at this point, "that I begged and implored him to return my fire."

"You did; it 's true," came from all parts of the room.

"Our man was right — no fight in the family," cried Hull, impetuously. "I will take his place, and I doubt not Captain Dacres will represent his own lieutenant. Our nations have forgotten the common brotherhood of a common ancestry in that which now lies between them, and I pledge my word there will be no interruptions on this occasion."

Dacres, with his hand on his sword, started forward impetuously.

"The man who fights in this house, must first cross swords with me," said old Colonel Barrett, calmly; "and old as I am, I trust that I have not forgotten how to bear arms as becomes a gentleman."

At this moment one of the colonel's servants came into the room.

"Please, suh, deys an offisuh fum de Constitution heah to see de cap'n."

"Captain Hull, where is he?" cried a young, excited voice.

"Here, sir," answered the captain, sharply. "Why do you call so loudly?"

"Sir," said the midshipman, saluting, "Lieutenant Read" — the officer left in command during Hull's absence — "has sent me to say that a deserter from the Guerrière came aboard the Constitution at seven bells, and shortly after an officer from that ship to demand his return."

"What answer did he make to that demand?" returned Hull, starting forward eagerly.

"He said, 'No, sir,'" responded the boy, breathlessly.

"What else did he do?"

"Beat to quarters, sir."

Hull smiled and lifted his hands.

"Well done!" he cried.

The Americans in the room broke into cheers.

"We will try out this quarrel on the decks of our ships," cried Dacres, fiercely. "Gentlemen," turning to his officers, "to your stations. Colonel Barrett, we thank you for your hospitality and bid you

good-night. Captain Hull, here 's to our speedy meeting," and laying his hand upon his sword, followed by his officers, he walked proudly out of the room.

"Gentlemen," said Hull, smiling, "we have a worthy antagonist. Let us go to our stations. Colonel Scott, Major Brady, a few words with you, please. Now, gentlemen," said Hull, after a little whispered conversation with the two army officers, "I am ready to go. Colonel Barrett, good-night."

"Captain Hull," said the old colonel, "as there is to be an engagement, I trust that I am not too old to remember the lessons of the Revolution. I shall be happy to serve as a volunteer with you, and these gentlemen here will desire the same privilege, I am sure."

"Three cheers for Colonel Barrett," was the reply, and they were given with a will. Then Hull continued: "I accept your services, gentlemen, and although I cannot take you on a cruise, if the action is to be fought here, you will be of great help to us."

Then after a further word or two between Captain Hull and the military officers, the whole party left the house and rapidly moved across the lawn toward the bay.

After the house with its remaining inmates had resumed its normal midnight quietness, two frightened girls, who had heard from the chamber they shared, which was immediately over the dining-room, the noise of the shot, the cheers, the roll of the drum in the still night, and had caught part of the conversation from the high pitched voices which indicated the quarrel; whose hearts were filled with

curiosity mingled with terror, crept softly down the stairs and into the empty room. Alas, even to women in that period, the deserted and disordered apartment told the not uncommon story.

"I am sure I distinguished Blake's voice," said Margaret.

"And I, Richard's," answered Evelyn.

"They must have been the principals if we heard aright," replied Margaret.

"Oh, to know that he . . . they are safe," said Evelyn, nervously.

"I see no blood stains," answered Margaret, shuddering and gazing wildly about the room.

"Oh, what is that?" suddenly cried Evelyn, pointing toward the floor in front of the shattered mirror. Margaret turned and stooped swiftly. "That" was one sunny curl that had been clipt from Fairford's head by Heathcote's bullet.

"Look," she said, holding it up to Evelyn's gaze, "I see it all now; Lieutenant Heathcote must have stood there beneath his mother's picture and Blake here. There was but one shot, you know, and that cut off this lock of hair, then there was an interruption of some sort, and now they have gone. He is unharmed . . . both of them . . . thank God."

"You are right," said Evelyn, "I see it too; but do you care so much for Lieutenant Fairford?" she asked softly.

"I love him," said Margaret, hiding her face in her hands, and weeping in the relief of the assurance. "And you, Evelyn?" she resumed in a moment, "are you not grateful there was but one shot? That they are both safe?"

"I am grateful and glad indeed," said the more reticent English girl, "that he . . . both are safe, thankful that no hand is stained with a brother's blood," she added solemnly.

"More than glad for one at least, are you not, Evelyn?" cried Margaret, springing forward with impulsive affection, and clasping her tall friend in her arms. "See, here is the rose he wore over his heart. I gave it to him, but that is nothing. It is you he loves; will you not keep it?"

Evelyn took it with a long sigh of relief and pressed it to her lips. "You are a sweet child, Margaret," she said gratefully. "Yes, more than glad, for I too . . ." and then Margaret kissed her and the two girls clung to each other in a new-born affection and sympathy, which not all the wars on earth could ever break.

CHAPTER VI

On the Deck of the Constitution

AT the end of the wharf at the foot of the hill, Captain Hull found one of the Constitution's boats waiting, and noticed with pleasure that the men who manned it were armed. The little party was soon embarked, and, under the impetus of the well trained and vigorous boat's crew, who used the long and steady man-of-war stroke, the cutter disappeared in the direction of the Constitution. The watchful officers on that ship presently heard the rattle of the oars in the row-locks, and then made out a dark blur on the still water.

"Boat ahoy!" cried the officer of the deck.

"Constitution," was the reply given by Hull himself. The officer at once sprang toward the starboard gangway, attended by the other officers, who were all on deck. The boatswain and his mates ranged themselves about the entrance with the side boys, while the midshipman in charge of the cutter brought her deftly alongside of the gangway, when the shrill whistling of the boatswain's pipes, as the captain stepped aboard, a somewhat unusual practice at night by the way, announced the arrival of the commanding officer. Acknowledging the salutes of his officers, his keen vision swept across the decks

crowded with men at their stations and lighted by long lines of battle lanterns.

"Well, Mr. Read," he said to the lieutenant in command, "you have a deserter on board?"

"Yes, sir, three."

"Three! I thought you said one from the Guerrière."

"So I did, sir, but, since that time, two more have come aboard from the Lion."

"Gad, gentlemen," said Hull, smiling, "if this keeps up, they won't have men enough left to fight us. Where are these deserters? I wish to see them," he continued, walking aft to the quarter-deck.

"Forward there," cried Lieutenant Read, sharply; "pass the word for the men from the Lion and the Guerrière to lay aft to the quarter-deck."

In a few moments, three men still dripping with water from their long swim, presented themselves before the captain.

"What is your name?" he asked of the smallest.

"Badely, sir, Bill Badely, at your honor's service," answered the man, with an unmistakable English accent, making a sea scrape with his foot, and knuckling his forehead by way of salute.

"And you are an American, are you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where were you born?"

"In Boston, sir."

"Oh, you were, were you? Boston, England, most likely." The man grinned sheepishly.

"What's your name?" asked the captain of the elder of the other two, a man of gigantic build.

"John Martin, sir, and this is my son Samuel. We were . . ."

"Steady," said Hull, sharply, "do not volunteer any information until you are asked for it. You are not an old man-o'-war's man, are you?"

"No, sir, we're fishermen."

"Where are you from?"

"Massachusetts, sir. Gloucester."

"So I should judge from hearing you speak. Are you two from the Lion?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, and you, Badely, from the Guerrière, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"How came you and your son to get on the Lion, Martin?"

"We were kidnapped two weeks ago from the schooner Eliza Ann by the d—d, murdering . . ."

"Avast there, that will do," said Hull, sternly. "I do all the swearing that is done on this quarter-deck myself. Go forward all of you."

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the elder Martin, touching his forehead respectfully as he realized something of the nature of the captain with whom he was dealing; "may I speak, sir?"

"What is it? Out with it."

"You won't give us up, sir, will you?"

The question was perfectly audible throughout the ship, the men of which were listening with strained attention for the reply.

"No!" said Hull, with emphasis.

"Three cheers for Captain Hull!" shouted the chief boatswain's mate, an old seaman by the name

of Joe Rhodes, who was standing near the mainmast in the waist of the ship, and the "fir-built" frigate rang from truck to keelson with the wild shouts of the crew.

The captain, not ill-pleased, turned to Mr. Read.

"Relate me all the circumstances as they occurred, sir."

"About seven bells in the first night watch a man from the Guerrière came alongside. His escape must have been discovered immediately, for a boat followed soon after with an officer and a demand for his surrender. I refused to return him without consulting you, and, as the Englishman was abusive and threatening, I thought it best to call all hands to their stations, while I sent a messenger to you. A short time ago the other two came aboard from the Lion. That is all, sir."

"You have done well, sir," replied the captain, "very well indeed. Now, gentlemen, to your stations all. Mr. Fairford, look to the batteries. Sailing master, I want springs got on the cables at once, in case it becomes necessary to wind her. Thank God, we are moored to that buoy astern as well as anchored ahead, it gives us a command of her that we may need. Let the men remain at their stations by the guns, Mr. Fairford, and keep all fast until I give the order. Let the officers keep a strict watch of the enemy and report at once the first suspicious movement. Colonel Barrett and the other gentlemen will remain with me on the quarter-deck. The armorer will provide you with arms, gentlemen, of which I am sure you will make good use in case of need."

At this moment the noise of an approaching boat was heard.

"Boat ahoy!" was the hail from the ship.

"Ay, ay," came the response.

"What boat is that?"

"Boat from the Guerrière."

"Boat ahoy," again shouted the lieutenant on the quarter-deck, as another cutter came shooting out of the darkness; "what boat is that?"

"Boat from the Lion."

The two boats speedily reached the gangway, and an officer left each and mounted to the deck.

"Is Captain Hull aboard?" said the first one, Lieutenant Howard of the Lion.

"Yes, sir."

"I have a message for him from Captain Cunningham."

"And I, one from Captain Dacres," said the second officer, who was Lieutenant Heathcote.

A midshipman at this moment came up and saluted.

"Captain Hull's compliments, sir. Will the gentlemen be kind enough to lay aft to the quarter-deck?"

When the two officers reached the quarter-deck, they found Captain Hull surrounded by a little group of officers, waiting for them. After a ceremonious interchange of salutations, Lieutenant Howard opened the conversation.

"We are informed, sir, that you have on board two men named Martin, deserters from the Lion."

"And one named Badely, a deserter from the Guerrière," added Heathcote.

"Your information is correct, gentlemen," responded Hull.

"Such being the case," said Howard, "I beg to present Captain Cunningham's compliments and transmit his demand that the men be given up at once." The officer's manner was arrogant and insulting to the last degree.

"I have the same demand to make on behalf of Captain Dacres for the Guerrière's man," said Heathcote, in the same rude way.

"Gentlemen," said Hull, his face flushing at the offensive language and manner of the two Englishmen, "I beg to present my compliments to your respective captains, and inform them that the men in question claim to be American citizens, and I cannot give them up."

"Such being your answer," said Howard, threateningly, "I am directed to state that Captain Cunningham proposes to have those men of his, even if he has to use force to secure them."

"Captain Dacres is of the same opinion, and the two ships are prepared to co-operate if necessary — though that would hardly be the case — to effect the thing at once," added Heathcote, imperiously, laying his hand on his sword.

"Very good, gentlemen," said Hull, recovering his composure with difficulty in the face of this unparalleled insult to him on his own quarter-deck, "you have delivered your messages, and I am indebted to Captains Dacres and Cunningham for the extremely courteous manner in which they couched their terms as well as for their happy choice of messengers. As to my reply, you shall have it in this way . . . "

"*Beat to quarters, there!*" he shouted in a voice of thunder, and, as soon as he could be heard above the

long roll of the drum, he continued in succession, as each order was obeyed: "*Cast loose and provide! Man the starboard battery! Run in! Load! Let the guns be double shotted! Run out! Let the forward division train on the Guerrière, the others on the Lion! Stand by the guns!*"

The men, with hearts full of joy, sprang to their work, and, at the words of command, cast loose from their sea lashings the massive guns of the ship's battery, ran them in, loaded them swiftly, and then ran them out like playthings. The ports of the ship were thrown open, and the lights from the battle lanterns streamed out over the dark waters, while the guns were trained and swung to right or left by their eager crews.

"Boat ahoy!" was heard again in sudden interruption. "What boat is that?"

"Message from Colonel Scott, sir," was the answer.

"Come aboard, here," promptly replied an officer at the port gangway.

A young lieutenant of artillery soon stepped upon the quarter-deck and saluted the captain.

"Well, sir," said Captain Hull.

"Colonel Scott's compliments, sir, and he has complied with your request. His artillery is now unlimbered, with the guns trained on the two British ships. They are in easy range, he says, and he awaits your signal to commence firing."

"Good," replied Hull. "Tell him when we let go the Constitution's battery, it will be a signal for him to join in."

"Major Brady," continued the lieutenant, "bade me say that he has his riflemen lined up behind the

fence on the bank, and not a soul can live on the tops and decks of those English ships if you give the word."

"Good again," said Hull, "tell him to begin when he sees us open fire. Now, gentlemen," he added, turning to the two English officers, who had heard the report of the lieutenant, and witnessed the action of the American captain, with ill-concealed rage, "you may have my answer, if these," with a wave of his hand toward the main deck, "have not told it to you. The men you speak of claim to be Americans. I am bound to believe their statements. They have applied to me to protect them in their rights. They are now under the jurisdiction of the American flag. I apply your own theory, and your own course of procedure in the case. Once under the flag, always under it. They are here, and they shall remain here. If your captains wish to take them, and are able to do so, they are welcome to make the attempt, but, may I be lost eternally, if I give them up so long as one plank clings to another on this old ship."

"Very good, sir," replied Lieutenant Howard, haughtily. "Come, Heathcote," he added, turning away.

"Gad, sir," shrieked Heathcote, white with passion, and exercising less constraint over himself, "if we Guerrières ever catch your pine coffin on the high seas . . ."

"Enough, sir!" thundered Hull. "I recognize no privilege conferred by your position as a messenger that gives you the right to insult me twice on my own ship. Leave it, sir, and do not come back again, unless at the head of a boarding party. Mr.

Fairford, will you escort these gentlemen over the side?"

"Three cheers again for Captain Hull!" shouted the boatswain's mate, and, with the ominous voices of the American sailors ringing in their ears, the two officers left the ship.

CHAPTER VII

The English Give up the Game

WHEN the Englishmen reached their respective ships, the two frigates awoke to life immediately. The rolling of their drums again broke the quiet of the still night, and the eager watchers on the Constitution, with ears trained by long practice, quickly detected other notes of preparation which indicated that the ships were clearing for action.

With perfect equanimity Captain Hull and his men awaited the battle storm which seemed about to break upon them. The Constitution alone would have been no match for the two British ships, one of which, as has been stated, was a "razee," that is, a cut down line-of-battle ship, of fifty guns; but, with the assistance of Colonel Scott's battery, which was so placed that it could deliver a deadly plunging, raking fire from above with but little chance for a return from the ships, and with the swarm of Major Brady's riflemen, excellent shots — as were all American woodsmen of that day — posted behind light breastworks on the hill and easily able to pick off the exposed Englishmen on the decks, the chances of the combat were more than equalized.

Though Hull expected and was indeed willing to be sunk at his anchors, if his antagonists attempted to carry out their threats, it was more than likely that

they would be worth nothing for offensive or defensive purposes when the conflict was over. About the only people who did not share the universal idea of British supremacy on the seas, were the little band of officers of the American Navy; and, since the trouble arose entirely over ships and sailors, they were especially anxious for that trial of strength and skill and seamanship and gunnery of which they soon showed themselves such masterly exponents.

Consequently, when Captain Hull left the quarter-deck, and walked up and down among his officers and men at their stations in the batteries, with a word of grim pleasantry here and there, he was met with such a spirit of determination and eagerness as left nothing to be desired.

The scene was indeed a striking one. Little groups of men at their appointed stations, many of them stripped to the waist, clustered about the massive artillery, which was illuminated by the bright light from the long rows of battle lanterns; the light was reflected from the polished cannon upon whose beautification the different crews had expended much assiduous labor, often giving the guns names as if they were human beings; the white decks were covered with the moving shadows of the eager men; convenient to hand were racks of glittering pikes and muskets; here and there a cutlass was poised in some nervous hand.

Below, out of sight, the surgeon and his mates in the cockpit — word of ominous and bloody significance — were arranging the simple surgical instruments of the period; the gunner and his men were prepared to hand out the charges from the maga

zine to the eager powder boys crowded about the hatchways.

Above, the marines on the poop-deck and the forecastle, the sail-trimmers in the gangways and about the masts, with the topmen aloft in the tops, completed the preparations. When Hull's brief inspection had been concluded, he returned to the quarter-deck and briefly addressed the men, exhorting them one and all to do their duty; reminding them at the same time, that the fight was peculiarly their own. As he finished his terse remarks, Joe Rhodes, the boatswain's mate, leaped upon the breech of a gun.

"Men," he shouted in his powerful voice, "let the quarter-deck look to the colors. We'll take care of the guns."

The response was a hurricane roar of, "Ay, Ays," followed by three more ringing cheers, while some of the younger men broke into the lively steps of the sailor's hornpipe, and all were smiling as if they were going to a party of pleasure rather than verging upon the imminent breach of a possible battle against heavy odds.

"With such a crew, and such a ship, I think we will give a good account of ourselves in case Dacres and Cunningham attempt to enforce their demands," said the captain to his first lieutenant.

"We all hope so," responded the latter, eagerly, "I will answer for the men in any contingency, sir."

Inasmuch as the training and efficiency of a ship and her company largely depend upon the capability and zeal of her first lieutenant, Fairford certainly spoke with authority.

"Well do I know it, my lad," said the captain,

kindly. "Let us go up aft and see what the English are doing."

The English appeared to be in a state of uncertainty. It was evident that both ships had their men at quarters, and were clear for action. Their ports were open, and the lights from the battle lanterns brilliantly illuminated the water about them. Rousing cheers had been heard from time to time from their decks. One of the Lion's boats had been seen making its way to the Guerrière, and it was presumed that a consultation was going on between the two captains. Hull and his lieutenant walked the deck together, its regular occupants having withdrawn to the other side. Colonel Barrett and the gentlemen volunteers, all full of eagerness for the fight, were grouped a little distance away upon the quarter-deck.

"Tell me, Blake," said Hull, dropping the commanding officer in the friend, for he had known Fairford since the latter had been a boy reefer with him on the old frigate John Adams, "was there anything back of that quarrel you had in the house?"

Fairford hesitated. He was usually reticent, his loneliness had made him so, but he was devoted to his captain, not only as an officer but as a friend.

"Yes, sir, there was."

"A woman?" asked Hull.

"Miss Barrett," answered Fairford, "that waltz . . . the rose she gave him. . . ."

"Put not your trust in woman," said Hull, with a gloomy cynicism unusual to one of his cheerful disposition, and one who was noted for his habitual consideration of and gentle courtesy to all women.

"Once I myself had . . . well . . . She laughed at me, my lad, when I had only one swab on my shoulder, and, when I was posted captain, she laughed again, and said she would n't marry any American sailor while all our ships were afraid of every cock-boat that flew the English flag; so I have put her out of my mind altogether, and now I am wedded to my ship. It 's a sailor's best bride, Fairford, believe me."

Fairford, who noticed that his captain sighed deeply nevertheless, received this rather astonishing confession in silence, and the two continued to pace up and down together, until Hull, awaking from his reverie, and perhaps ashamed of his confidence, sent the first lieutenant to his station, directing him to allow the men of the gun crews to go to sleep beside their guns, their captains only remaining on the alert, since no movement had been made by the English.

Thenceforth, until the gray dawn came stealing over the hills, he walked his deck alone, buried in his own thoughts, though never for a moment losing sight of his antagonists, all the men in his little company respecting his silence. When the day broke, Dacres and Cunningham, who had been much perplexed as to the action to be taken, and in whose otherwise simple calculations Scott's batteries and Brady's riflemen had obtruded themselves as very disturbing factors, saw with their own eyes the untenable nature of their position.

The morning also brought reflection. War had not yet been declared, they would bide their time. After a hasty consultation, therefore, without more ado, their men were called from their quarters and

ordered to get the ships under way. The anchors were soon a-trip and the ships, covered with clouds of canvas, slipped away before the fresh breeze without any further interchange of courtesies, and with the derisive cheers of the Americans, in which the men of Colonel Scott's battery and the Infantry uproariously joined, ringing in their ears. The Constitution's men were not happy, however, if one could judge from the remarks of Rhodes, who said *sotto voce*, in the hearing of the captain, —

"Dash it all, don't we get no fightin' at all after all this night performance?"

"You shall have all you want, Rhodes, and that before long, or I am not a prophet," said Hull, smiling. "Mr. Fairford, pipe to breakfast; Colonel Barrett, gentlemen, will you honor me?"

CHAPTER VIII

A Rose Rejected

LATE in the afternoon, when the English ships had long since disappeared down the bay and were well on their way to the sea, a boat was called away, and Colonel Barrett and the other gentlemen were taken back to the Hall. They were accompanied by Lieutenants Fairford and Ludlow. On the arrival of the party at the house, they found the ladies congregated on the porch, and greatly excited over the mysterious happenings of the night and morning, of which they had somehow become aware.

They swarmed about the men with eager inquiries, and the conversation soon became general. A thrill of delight pervaded Margaret's heart when she saw Fairford unharmed, and, although that gentleman continued to regard her with the gloomy animosity and grave dissatisfaction of the previous evening, she was filled with joy in the consciousness of their mutual affection. She believed of course that the estrangement between them would be temporary at most, and waited impatiently for a moment alone with him to effect a reconciliation.

"Can you tell me," said Evelyn to Lieutenant Ludlow, when she had with much dexterity made an opportunity to see him alone, "if all of the English officers were unharmed after last night?"

As she spoke, in spite of her self-control, she found herself blushing deeply.

"All of them, I believe, were perfectly safe when the ships sailed away."

"Are you sure? Was my cousin . . .?"

"He was as well as the rest," said Ludlow. "Tell me, Miss Evelyn, is it only because of your relationship as his cousin that you ask?"

"Surely," said Evelyn, drawing herself up in surprise; "but by what right do you question?"

"By no right, unless the fact that I love you myself confers the privilege," he said promptly.

"I never thought of this, Mr. Ludlow," she said in great surprise at this blunt and sailor-like declaration.

"Did you not? I was afraid all the world could see it, but is it too late? Won't you think of it now?"

She shook her head sadly, in pity for the gallant young man, the sincerity of whose affection she could not doubt, in spite of the suddenness of its declaration, and the haste in which it had come into being, after a short week of companionship.

"No, I cannot even dream of such things, nor must you. You will soon forget it, I am sure. Believe me, I am sorry."

"Sorry enough to give me one of those roses you wear?" he said, mournfully accepting the inevitable, which spoke in her voice, as she calmly met his prompt decisiveness with her own.

"Certainly. Why not?" she replied, giving him the choicest bud of those she held. "Now let us rejoin the rest, and we will both forget this little episode," and she extended her hand to him, smiling kindly.

"As you will," he answered, bowing gravely over her friendly hand, "but it is not an episode to me, unless life and death are but episodes after all."

Far down the road leading over the hills back of the plantation, which was for a long distance in full view of the party on the porch, a horseman could be seen rapidly coming toward them. He rode in haste as if pursued. When he drew rein on the gravelled walk before the door, they saw that his horse was covered with foam, panting and exhausted. The man leaned from the saddle.

"In the service of the Government," he cried, "Captain Hull of the Constitution?"

"He is on his ship below, yonder," answered Colonel Barrett. "Do you bear news?" he added, as the messenger gathered up the reins and turned toward the wharf.

"Yes, sir; war has been declared with England, and I have orders for the Constitution to get to sea," he cried, striking his spurs into his jaded steed.

"Hold, sir," said Colonel Barrett, quickly; "two of that ship's officers are here, and will take you on board. Leave your horse with us till you return."

"Come, Ludlow," cried Fairford, full of excitement. "Good bye, Colonel Barrett," he added as he wrung the old soldier's hand.

"God bless you, my boy," was the answer, and then raising his hat gracefully to the ladies, the young officer turned to the messenger.

"Come this way, sir."

Margaret's heart sank within her as the little party walked rapidly down the walk past the end of the

porch. She detached herself from the rest and ran fleetly to intercept them.

"Blake," she called softly.

"Go on," said the young man to his companions, "I will overtake you." He turned and stood before her with bared head.

"Blake," she said again, holding out her hand, "you are not going away without saying good bye to me, are you?"

He made no answer, and she went on timidly, detaching a rose from those she wore at her breast, "won't you take a rose now?"

"Your roses are too generally distributed, Margaret, for them to be of great value." She shrank back before his bitter words, and he went on mercilessly: "Perhaps if we overtake the Guerrière, I can get one from my brother . . . if I wish it after last night," he added, meaningly. Her little hand dropped by her side at his bitter words, and the neglected rose fell at her feet. Where had her pride gone? Apparently he had it all as he had her heart. Her eyes swam with tears.

"Good fortune to you . . . farewell," she whispered.

"Thank you, good bye," he said coldly with foolish pride; and then after hesitating a moment he turned upon his heel and ran rapidly after his disappearing companions.

"God bring him safely back to me," she murmured, and then, avoiding the rest, sought the quiet of her chamber.

"What have you there, Robert?" said Fairford, to his friend as they sat in the boat.

"Nothing but a flower and a memory, Blake," was the reply.

"I have no flower and I wish to heaven I had no memory," said Fairford, bitterly, looking back to the white house on the hill.

"Muster the crew," said Hull, calmly, when he had read his orders. "My lads," he said to the men as they ranged themselves around the mast, crowding the gangways and filling the waist, "war has been declared against Great Britain. We are ordered to sea with special instructions to look out for the Guerrière. We will get under way at once and perhaps we may overhaul her to-morrow. Mr. Fairford, take the ship."

"All hands up anchor!" shouted the young lieutenant in exultation, leaping upon the bridge amid the cheers of the men. "Man the capstan!"

Had they been returning home from a foreign cruise the men could not have surpassed the eagerness with which they sprung to the bars. To the rude tune of some time-honored chantey, or song, the anchor was jerked from its oozy bed and catted and fished in an incredibly short time. At the word of command the eager topmen sprang into the shrouds and spread themselves upon the soaring yards. Cloth after cloth of snowy canvas was unfurled; the sheets hauled home; the yards mast-headed with a will, until the old frigate, bowing to the gentle breeze, started forth upon that career of conquest which was to make her the most famous ship in history. The cheers of the Artillerymen and the Infantrymen on the banks bade them God speed.

As they passed the little summer house on the

brow of the hill, the colonel and the others with the little group of women waved their hands in farewell.

One there was, small and weak and brown, who, from her chamber window, watched the great ship speeding down the bay, till she was lost in the falling night. Her trembling hands pressed a neglected red rose to her lips as she bowed her head upon the window ledge in something not unlike despair.

Book II

"OLD IRONSIDES"

CHAPTER IX

Master Rhodes' Opinion of the Captain

TWO months had elapsed since the declaration of war. On the afternoon of Wednesday, August the nineteenth, the frigate Constitution under all plain sail, about eight hundred miles off the Massachusetts coast, or as the sights at noon had indicated in latitude 41° 41′ North, longitude 55° 48′ West, was moving swiftly southward. Several prizes had been taken since she left Boston, which she had visited after her brilliant escape from the British fleet in the preceding month, but nothing of any great importance had as yet occurred on this cruise.

Several English frigates were known to be off the coast, however, and the Constitution had a lookout at every masthead eagerly sweeping the sea. Both watches had finished dinner, and as the afternoon drills had not yet begun, the Jackies were having a few moments of idleness, which they employed as usual in smoking, skylarking, or yarning. Afternoon grog had just been served out, and there had been much smacking of lips over the small modicum of the fiery mixture of rum and water allotted to each individual. One jolly seaman in the gangway was trolling out the verse of a song: —

"Here 's grog enough; come drink about,
I know your hearts are firm and stout,
American blood will never give out,
And often we have proved it."

Forward on the topgallant forecastle, Master Rhodes, the old boatswain's mate, was holding forth to an admiring group of the more substantial sea-worthies congregated there.

"Well, wot kind of a man do you think the old man would be in a fight, matey?" asked one old salt who had made many voyages in Baltimore clippers, speaking with the soft drawl of the South which even the rough sea could not alter. "You see, most of us is from the merchant service, an' aint had no experience afore in warships."

"Ay," said another, with an unmistakable Yankee twang, "we 've been wondering wot he 'd do if we 'd rise a British frigate off yonder."

"We know he is a prime seaman right enough," added a third. "Any man as ever handled a wheel or passed a weather earrin' can see that all right."

"Well now, mates," said old Rhodes, thoughtfully removing a spent chew of tobacco from his capacious mouth, and flipping the quid over the side, "I 'll tell you that he 's as good a fighter as he is a sailor, an' I can't say no mor 'n that, can I?"

"No, ye can't."

"That 's good enough, sure."

"True for you, old man," were the responses.

"You know wot sort of a seaman he is. You saw him git away from that English squadron we run into last month, an' them as shipped at Boston an' did n't see it have heard tell of it."

"Aint heard nothin' but that since I come aboard," growled a young foretopman, strolling across the deck and joining in the conversation.

"Well, that was good work," continued Rhodes, disdaining the interruption, "towin' when we could tow, kedgin' when we could kedge, histin' the boats to the davits on the run, never losin' a spar or a gun, an' only lightenin' the ship by pumpin' out water, which we did n't need much anyways, havin' plenty o' grog aboard."

"Ay, that was fine work, never seed nothin' like it afore," responded the captain of the forecastle approvingly.

"Fine it was, shipmates, I could n't ha' done it better myself," said old Joe, smiling at the general laugh which followed his remark. "I 've knowed him for twenty year. I was coxun of the cap'n's gig, as smart a sailor as ever you see in them days, if I do say so myself as I should n't, when he came aboard as passed midshipman actin' fourth luff in the old John Adams frigate, an' him just appinted from the merchant sarvice too. She were a sailor an' no mistake, the fastest thing on the ocean in her day, an' before we quit her, he was the first luff. With him he brought a young reefer scarcely big enough to go without them things little children wears, what d' ye call 'em? Some one who 's married gimme a lift."

"I 've been married several times," said the Benedick of the forecastle, with mournful hesitation.

"Only to one woman at a time I 'm hopin', mate," said Rhodes, who was a great moralist in his way.

"I knowed a man that had a wife in Havana, an' one in South Shields, an' another in Boston, an' God

knows where else; a nice time he 'll have if he gits to heaven with all them wimmen," said another veteran tar.

"I 'm lowin' to go to heaven fur to git a rest," returned the Benedick, sadly. "You was askin' me about child's riggin', was you not, shipmate? Well, I call 'em pantylets."

"Ay, pantylets, that's the word," said Rhodes. "Well, as I was a sayin' he was a bright one too, an' there he stands aft there," said old Joe, pointing toward Fairford on the quarter-deck. "We left Cap'n Hull after a spell an' I went with the reefer into the old Constellation. She was another good one too. My, how we did lick the Froggies in two frigate fights on her. Then I got back under Cap'n Hull agin, an' the reefer he come too, an' the old man was first leftenant on this yere very ship. An' I was one of a boarding party that did a mighty neat thing a follerin' him down at Porty Platty in Hayti."

"How was that, Joe? Tell us the yarn, old shipmate," said the captain of the afterguard, as the old man paused meditatively and then continued:—

"There was a French privateer there that had been makin' no end of trouble for our traders in them seas. We took a small schooner called the Sally, an' a tight little craft she were too, like some gals of the name I 've knowed. We loaded her up with men from the Constitution an' run boldly into the harbor, an' landed a company of marines, who behaved very well, considerin' wot sort o' mermaids they are. They spiked the guns of the fort which was commandin' us, an' then we piled over the bows of the privateer, an' give 'em the cold edge of our cutlashes. My, how

the Craypos fought, but 't want no use, an' presently the last one slung down his pike an' went over the bows, an' we had her. Him and me was in the thick of it all."

"Was Leftenant Fairford there too?" interrupted one of the eager auditors.

"That he was," said old Joe; "he never was far away when there was any fightin' goin' that he could git his hands in."

"Who led the marines?" said another.

"Why, our present marine officer, Cap'n Bush. He was only leftenant then. I hate a marine like I hate a lee-shore, but dash my wig if that one aint about as good as they make 'em. He aint afeard of nothin' any mor'n the captain aint. Now you can judge from that what kind of a man we're sailin' under, an' I tell you, my hearties, if he gits sight of the English in this old hooker, there's goin' to be a surprise, providin' you fellers do your part."

"We 'll do that all right, eh, my bullies?" said the young foretopman before mentioned.

"Ay, ay," came a deep-toned chorus in approval.

"We've all got scores to settle with them fellows," said one.

"My father died in the prison ship Jersey in the Revolution, d — n 'em," said another.

"My boy and I were pressed on the Lion and treated like dogs," said old Martin, who with his son had just joined the group.

"I've got lashes enough on my back to make me hate 'em," said Badely, the English deserter. "Curse 'em, I was pressed — took up by a gang of brutes the evenin' of the day I was married — think of that, mates, an' beat insensible an' hauled aboard like a

pig, an' Polly lyin' in a dead swoond upon the beach when I see her last. If it comes to fightin' I 'm as good an American as any of ye."

"I aint never been married," answered one sympathetically, "but it must have been hard, mate."

"It aint till after a man 's been married some while that he 's willin' to be pressed aboard ship," said the nautical Benedick, with another melancholy shake of the head.

"Did n't he do no fightin' off Tripoli?" asked one of the group of Rhodes.

"I 've heard so. I was n't there myself, more 's the pity, till it was most over, but I've heard how he used to take the old Argus brig in under their pagan batteries, an' raise merry h—l, him bein' just as calm and peaceful like as he is now, all the time."

"Mr. Rhodes," respectfully said one of the ship's boys, who had only come aboard at Boston, and for whom the chief boatswain's mate was a great personage indeed, "will we get any prize money, do you think, sir?"

"Prize money, you young cub," said Joe, catching him playfully by the ear, "of course. Everybody whose name is on the muster roll will git his share."

"Mine aint on yet though, sir," said the boy, squirming.

"Better give it in then an' git it on," said Joe, releasing him. "Lord, to think of them old times. I was bos'un's mate then, an' I 'm bos'un's mate now, an' bos'un's mate I 'll be when I die, an' if there are ships in heaven, I reckon I 'll be a bos'un's mate there."

"Yes, if you git there," said the master-at-arms,

sneeringly, having heard the latter part of the conversation.

"D—n your eyes," said the old sailor, with sudden heat, "why should n't I git there? I 've always done my duty, an' barrin' a few drunks an' an occasional fight or so, an' when I was younger a . . . a . . . sweetheart, I 've done it well too. They need masters-at-arms in hell though, I 'm told, and that 's where you 'll go sure, an' you 're well fitted for the place, eh, mates? We don't get no chance to be religious on shipboard, but I don't believe God 's goin' to be too hard on a poor sailor man. What d' ye think, mates?"

"You are right, Joe," said the old gunner's mate.

"An' He knows us, an' I reckon He 's lookin' after us," went on the old sailor, simply, "an' unless He is mighty easy with us, we won't have no chance at all."

The mellow tone of the ship's bell here interrupted the conversation.

"Four bells," said old Joe, "we 'll be called to target practice in a minute now. I 'll lay aft to be ready for —"

"Sail ho!" came down from the foremast head from the lookout on the royal yard.

"Where away?" shouted the officer of the deck.

"Two points on port bow, sir."

"That 's well. Keep a bright lookout there. Sing out when you make anything of her."

"I feel it in my bones, mates," said Rhodes, as he walked along the gangway, "that you 're goin' to find out pretty soon what kind of a fighter the old man is, an' wot 's more, he 's goin' to find out wot kind of a fighter you are, by the same token."

CHAPTER X

The Young Financier

THE midshipman on watch, by direction of his superior, the officer on deck, had instantly reported the sail to Captain Hull, who came hastily from his cabin to the quarter-deck. The advent of a sail at sea is always a matter of interest, a relief to the so-called monotony of a voyage, but when the waters teem with ships of the enemy in time of war, it becomes a matter of serious import, at once.

"How does she bear, Mr. Read?" said Hull to that officer.

"East sou'east, sir," was the reply. "Over there, about two points on the port bow."

"Head her on that course, then," said Hull, quietly. Break out the stun'sls, too, we 'll have a look at her. Better call all hands," he added, though this was a perfunctory order, since everybody not necessarily employed below was already on deck. In an incredibly short time the ship, her course having been altered and her airy studding sails extended far beyond the broad yard-arms like the wings of a gigantic bird, swept forward toward the strange sail with greatly accelerated motion.

At five bells, the man on the main royal hailed:

"I can make her out now, sir."

"What is it?"

"Large ship, sir . . . man-o-'war . . . a frigate, I think."

At six bells or three o'clock the ship was in plain sight from the deck. As the lookouts had surmised, she was a large warship evidently, and presumably an enemy. She was heading about southwest on the starboard tack under easy canvas. The Constitution was kept off a little, so as not to pass astern of the chase, which at half-past four o'clock hauled up her courses and took in and furled her topgallant sails, her royal yards not having been crossed. There was no doubt as to her character now, and while there was a question as to her name and force, yet all who were capable of judging on the Constitution, were confident that she was the Guerrière.

There was no ship on the ocean which was so thoroughly detested by the Americans for her offensive acts, as the Guerrière. Under her previous captains, she had been foremost in disrespect to the flag and abuse of maritime privilege; in fact, she was the insult of the ocean upon our shores. The frigates President, United States and Constitution, sister ships, were each anxious to meet her, and two of them, which had got to sea, were eagerly seeking her. It was with great joy, therefore, that Hull welcomed a prospective opportunity for trying her mettle.

"What do you think of her, Master Rhodes?" he said to the old seaman, who happened to be passing by, and who was a great favorite and something of a privileged character with all the officers.

"It's the Gurreer, sir," he replied, touching his hat.

"Now you 'll get that fight you wanted so badly in the Chesapeake, I think," said the captain, smiling.

"Yes, sir, an' we 'll git a good one too, I guess. Them British, sir, you know, are hard fellows on salt water."

"I know that," answered Hull; "they are a hard set of fellows surely, but we 've got a harder set, I think."

"Lord love you, your honor," answered Rhodes, "we have surely. They 're as full o' fight as game-cocks. Here 's one of 'em, sir, an' a little one he is too, as wants to see you."

Shrinking behind old Rhodes' gigantic figure was the small boy before mentioned, yclept William Cotton. He was trembling with nervousness at the idea of speaking to the captain, and if it had not been for Rhodes' restraining hand on his shoulder, he would have cut and run at the last moment.

"What is it, my lad?" said Hull, quietly. Although he was a severe disciplinarian, he was just and humane in his treatment of his men, — who repaid him with a devotion little short of idolatry, — and he was desirous of granting any reasonable request even from a small boy, especially in view of the approaching action. "Speak out. Don't be afraid. I don't want anybody on this ship to be afraid of anything. Is not that correct, Mr. Fairford?"

"Of course, sir, but a little judicious fear of the captain is not a bad thing after all, I think," said the young lieutenant, thoughtfully.

"Oh — er — of course, I did n't refer to that, which is most proper, as you say."

"P-p-p-please, sir," said the boy, squirming, "I

only come aboard at Boston, sir, and my name is not on the muster roll, sir. I want you to have it put down now, sir."

"What for?" said Hull, smiling.

"So's I can draw my prize money, sir."

The captain laughed. "It shall be done," he said. "Mr. Fairford, do you see that the name of this young financier is entered upon the muster roll at once." William saluted, and with a light heart ran forward, visions of wealth dazzling his sight.

The Constitution having now drawn sufficiently near the chase, which indeed had not showed the slightest desire to escape, but having backed her main topsail was calmly awaiting the approach, Captain Hull deliberately took in his studding-sails, sent down the royal yards, furled the topgallant sails, hauled down the staysails, hauled up the courses and left them hanging in the brails, then took a reef in the topsails and having made everything snug alow and aloft, beat to quarters and squared away for the enemy.

CHAPTER XI

The Guerrière Begins the Game

AS the Constitution with diminished speed on account of her reduced sail slowly neared the Guerrière, an intense silence pervaded the ship. Every one, from the smallest powder-monkey to the captain, realized the momentous nature of the impending conflict. A new aspirant for naval honors was about to meet the hitherto undisputed mistress of the seas. Would her fate be that of the Dutchman, the Frenchman and the Spaniard, who had successively challenged and yielded the title, or would the new-comer break the spell of the British name? So far as the American Navy had been hitherto tried in the war with France and in the Tripolitan conflict, it had proved itself of first-class efficiency; and to go still further back, the few combats of the Revolution had augured well for its future.

The crew of the Constitution was in a certain sense a green crew. They had been together but a short time, and many of them had probably never heard a shot fired in anger from the great gun of a ship, yet there was a large body of veteran seamen on board, old men-o'-war's men like Rhodes, who had been judiciously distributed throughout the gun crews, which they generally commanded, and allotted to the more important stations of the ship.

THE GUERRIÈRE BEGINS THE GAME

The crews of the English men-o'-war of the day had been raised, so to speak, upon battle, but the general character of the men who composed them was very far below that of the Americans, who were recruited from a singularly capable merchant service, the men being hardy and bold to a notable degree. Many of them had been pressed into the British service, learning something of fighting there, and carried a rankling desire for revenge in their bosoms; a desire punctuated and accentuated by the deep scars left by the cat upon their backs.

Short as had been the period of their service, they had been exercised with unusual frequency at the great guns, and their captain had not been afraid to expend powder and shot in daily target practice. The armament of the frigate was of the very best and latest pattern. One great advantage she possessed over the English lay in the fact that all her guns were provided with sights and the captains had been trained to take careful aim.

The discipline of the ship, while stern and rigorous, as must be that of every war vessel, was in no sense merciless, cruel or unjust. With such a crew, there was no necessity for that iron severity by which England retained control of and rendered efficient the motley refuse which the press gang collected and deposited upon her decks. The older men, no mean judges in the matter, had received ample demonstration of Hull's transcendent ability as a sailor, in the brilliant tactics and seamanship by which he had effected his escape from the squadron which had pursued them a month before, and among which had been the very ship they were now approaching.

Indeed, it may be confidently stated, that no more thorough seaman ever commanded a ship in the United States Navy, or in any other navy, than Isaac Hull. His long apprenticeship in the merchant service, and his varied experiences in the navy, combined with a remarkable degree of professional aptitude, had made him a past master of the difficult and delicate art of the sailor. He had sailed in the Constitution years before, and knew the ship and her qualities, what she could do and what she could not do, better than the average man knows the true character of his wife, for the ship spoke to him without dissimulation and without reserve, and followed his guidance without disobedience or strife. Therefore, as the captain, attended by the sailing-master and several midshipmen as aids, stood upon the top-gallant forecastle for the better purpose of observing the enemy, he looked forward with perfect confidence to the impending conflict.

As the Constitution drew near to her antagonist, through the glass the English officers could be plainly seen, passing and repassing the ports where the gun crews stood at their quarters. At this moment the stops upon several small dark balls of bunting which had been hanging at the several mastheads and the gaff were broken, and four of the splendid and glorious red ensigns of old England streamed out in the fresh breeze. They were at once answered by a display of the beautiful stars and stripes from similar points of vantage on the American ship.

Presently the mainyard of the English ship was swung, she gathered way and slowly forged ahead.

Suddenly the eager watchers saw flashes of light shoot out from her side, followed by shrouding clouds of smoke which completely obscured the ship for a moment and out of which came the deep roar of the heavy guns of the frigate's batteries. The first broadside of the English did no damage as the Constitution was not yet within range, but the sound of it sent a thrill of emotion through every heart. Their antagonist meant business, the battle was on. The veteran gunners blew their smoking matches and looked eagerly toward the captain.

The Guerrière shot out from the cloud of smoke and wore around (that is, turned upon her heel away from the wind in order to bring the other side to bear). The distance between the ships was now less than before, but Hull's practised eye scarcely yet considered the ships in range. Again the English ship was wreathed in flame and smoke, and this time a few of her shot passed over the Constitution, doing no damage beyond cutting a rope here and there.

The silence upon the decks of the American was absolute. Not a sound could be heard above the splash of the waves against her bows, or the singing of the wind, which was steadily freshening, through the top hamper. As the breeze carried away the smoke, it was seen that the English ship, handled with that beautiful smartness for which their navy was famous, was again wearing to bring her starboard broadside into play once more.

"Mr. Neill," said Hull quietly to one of his midshipmen, "run aft and tell the quarter-master to stand by to put the helm to starboard. We must not let her rake us, Mr. Aylwyn," he said to the sail-

ing-master, as the midshipman touched his cap and ran along the gangway toward the wheel.

"Stand by," he shouted a moment afterward, and then, "Hard a-starboard. Flow the head-sheets there. Haul aft the spanker-sheet."

As these orders were obeyed swiftly the Constitution swung her great side parallel to the enemy to avoid being raked, and received a third broadside, which did no more damage than the others.

"First division there," shouted Hull at the same moment, "give him a shot with the forward guns." Several sharp reports followed in succession.

"Let her go off again. Flatten in the head-sheets. Steady with the helm, we must close with her. I do not like this business of playing at long bowls," he said.

The Guerrière was wearing again in the smoke to bring the other broadside to bear. As before, the Constitution presented her broadside to the enemy and answered with her forward guns, in one instance delivering a broadside. The manœuvre was several times repeated without any apparent material damage to either ship, until the Englishman, who had assumed to play it, tired of the game, and slowly ran off with the wind on the port quarter; an open invitation to close, which Hull would not have disregarded in any event, even had he not been persistently endeavoring to get into close action ever since the chase was sighted.

"We 'll never get alongside at this rate," he said finally. "Main topsail yard there, lay aloft and loose the to'gallant sail. Lively! Man the to'gallant halyards; hands on the foresheets; overhaul the brails,

there, one of you. Let fall, sheet home, hoist away."

The men ran the foresail down and the topgallant sail up as if they had been silk instead of stiff and heavy canvas. The courses of the two ships now made a sharp angle with each other, and the Constitution under the added sail began rapidly to overhaul the enemy, which was leisurely jogging along waiting for her, her batteries grimly silent.

"Have the guns double shotted, Mr. Fairford," said Hull calmly to his first lieutenant, who had been superintending the batteries as was customary. "One round shot and a stand of grape as well."

CHAPTER XII

The Constitution Makes Reply

AT this moment, the fire from the Guerrière reopened fiercely again. This time the shot of the English took effect. Shrouds, ropes and braces were cut here and there; a great rent appeared in the foresail; one heavy shot struck the rail forward and sent a cloud of splinters flying almost as high as the foreyard; one jagged piece of wood tore the throat out of the captain of number three gun forward; another splinter, and a larger piece struck one of the sail-trimmers clustered about the foremast a frightful blow in the chest, completely crushing it in, and laying him senseless on the deck, upon which he died before he could be taken below. Blood which dripped down from the foretop, where were stationed topmen and marines, indicated that at least one bullet had found its billet there as well.

"Steady, men, steady," said Read, the officer commanding the forward division, in which these casualties had occurred, noticing the pale faces and horrified looks of some of the younger men, although the old veterans, used to such scenes, calmly squinted along the sights of their guns, and with waves of their hands and whispered words to the men at the elevating chocks or to the hand-spikesmen and tacklemen, kept

them training upon the enemy, which was now pouring forth a rapid fire.

Hull had resumed his station on the quarter-deck. He was standing with his hands clasped behind his back, his head bent forward, looking eagerly at the other ship. His lips were tightly closed and his eyes shone with battle fire. In common with many choleric and excitable men, he became more and more cool and composed as the supreme moment of emergency approached. Fairford sprang aft hurriedly.

"The enemy has opened fire and killed two of our men; shall I return it, sir?"

"Not yet, sir," answered Hull, calmly.

The helm, by the captain's direction, had been gradually shifted to starboard until the two vessels were running in parallel courses. An attempt on the enemy's part to cross the Constitution's bow, and an attempt on her part to pass the Englishman's stern, both for the purpose of raking, had been promptly made, and being skilfully met, had been given over in both instances, and the two captains at once resigned themselves to a yard-arm to yard-arm fight and squared away. The starboard bow of the Constitution began gradually to lap the Englishman's port quarter.

"Shall I open fire now, sir?" asked Fairford again, the men eagerly awaiting the reply.

"Not yet, sir."

The bow drew up opposite the gangway.

"Now, sir?" cried Fairford the third time.

"Not yet, sir," responded Hull, imperturbably.

The Englishmen were firing rapidly though with but little apparent effort, and the Americans noticed that

many of their shot were striking the stout sides of the Constitution and falling back into the water, without penetrating or doing any damage, hence the sailors — and indeed everybody else after that — called that ship by her now famous name, "Old Ironsides."

The bow of the Constitution was now abreast of the foremast of the Englishman.

"Stand by," shouted the captain at this moment, stepping over to the starboard or engaged side of the deck. Every gun captain took a last glimpse at the English ship. Their hands instinctively tightened on their smoking matches which they blew furiously. Men stood in attitudes of tense expectation.

"*Fire! Let them have it, men! Pour it into them,*" shouted Hull, with all the force of his deep powerful voice, bending himself almost double in eager emphasis, as he delivered the commands. He was wearing a very tight pair of white knee trousers, and history likes to tell that as he gave this order, he split them from knee to waistband, and went through all the rest of the combat thus peculiarly habited. With a crash like thunder, the twenty-seven heavy guns of the Constitution's starboard battery roared out in unison.

The two ships were now within half pistol shot distance from each other, and the aim of the practised Americans was absolutely perfect. Neglecting the upper works, every shot was driven home in the enemy. Hull had fired with perfect calculation, choosing the downward roll of his ship as the opportune moment, and the heavy round shot from the grim twenty-four pounders and the carronades could

be heard crushing through the sides, while the hail of grapeshot swept through the ports and laid out man after man; so sudden and awful was the effect of the broadside that for a moment the fire of the Englishman was completely suspended.

Three stout British cheers rang out bravely, however, and the enemy, recovering themselves, answered the broadside with spirit; but nothing could equal the swiftness and rapidity of the American fire. The stout seamen served and ran the guns in and out like toys. Their hot muzzles were wreathed in sheets of flame. They were firing at an average of about once every forty seconds, and the roar of the discharge was practically continuous. The crackle of the small-arms of the topmen and marines produced a staccato note easily heard above the diapason of the cannonade and the wild screeching of the carronade slides which added much to the confusion. Here and there a man fell and lay groaning and unheeded in the mad excitement of the combat.

For a long fifteen minutes the two ships side by side kept up the fierce battle, until the mizzenmast of the enemy, having been squarely pierced by a twenty-four pound shot, broke short off and went over the starboard quarter with a crash plainly audible above the roar of the guns.

"Hurrah, lads," shouted Hull gaily, his eye kindling and glancing, "we 've made a brig of her."

"If she floats long enough," said one of the men audaciously, "we 'll make her a sloop."

"Hull her. Hull her," cried another, pointing to the captain.

These examples of forecastle wit were greeted by

a gigantic laugh and wild cheers from the men. The heavy spars of the mizzenmast acting as a drag on the leeside of the Englishman, counteracted the helm and now pulled her head slightly around away from the wind. The Constitution having drawn somewhat ahead previously, shot clear of the smoke around the Guerrière, and the firing for the moment ceased. Men were working furiously with axes to cut away the wreck which rendered the Englishman partially unmanageable. Manœuvring as he came clear of the smoke which the strong breeze carried swiftly to leeward, Hull saw his opportunity.

"Port the helm. . . . Lively," he shouted. "Hands by the braces there." The hardy Constitution swept around as gracefully as an airy bird. The wind struck her upon the starboard quarter; slowly she bore up; the starboard tacks were boarded, the bowlines tautened and the sheets hauled aft. In a trice she was standing across the bows of the hapless Englishman, who received a broadside at close range square in the face. His ship was raked from stem to stern, and he could oppose no guns to those of his enemy.

Luffing up into the wind to check her headway before she passed out of range, the Constitution repeated her raking broadside. Through and through the length of the English ship swept the searching hail. The carnage and destruction were frightful. But the Constitution was now almost in irons, and it became necessary to boxhaul, to get back on the other tack. As she drew slowly ahead, the headyards were braced aback to box her off in order that she might cross the bows of the enemy once more, bringing the port broadside to bear for a further raking.

At the critical moment of the manœuvre, some of the braces being carried away, the yards jammed, the ship gathered sternway, and her head slowly swung to port. At the same time, the English ship, her wrecked mizzenmast having been cut away, forged ahead; her helm was ported and swung to starboard, in a last desperate effort to close and board. Slowly her long bowsprit swept over the Constitution's quarter and the two ships came together abaft the latter's mizzenmast with a mighty crash.

CHAPTER XIII

Boarders Away!

THE bowsprit of the Guerrière fell against the port mizzen-rigging of the Constitution and the two ships drew so close together that the roll of the sea, growing steadily heavier under the freshening breeze, caused the cutwater of the Englishman to chafe and grind against the side of the American ship. The vessels were so near to each other that the men could see the whites of the eyes of their enemies, and the white and gold figurehead of the French-built English ship was within easy reach of the hand, her bowsprit stretching far across the quarter-deck.

The Constitution in this position had not a single gun that she could bring to bear. The starboard bow guns of the enemy, however, pounded the after cabins of Captain Hull's ship to pieces, and the burning gun-wads soon caused a fire to start in that vulnerable part of the ship; but the flames were at once extinguished by the after division under Lieutenant Hamilton, who brought a severe musketry fire to bear upon the enemy through the after ports, which temporarily silenced her bow guns by depriving them of their crews.

Just then the flag at the Constitution's mizzen-truck, the halyards having been cut by a shot, came down

in the top with a run, but Hogan, a young marine, spiritedly climbed up to the truck with it in his hand, and although a number of British marines fired at him, he replaced it at the masthead and descended in safety to his station.

The instant the two ships came together, both sides called away boarders, the Englishmen mustering on the forecastle, the Americans on the quarter-deck. The bowsprit of the former extending over the deck formed a convenient line of attack. As the upper decks became crowded with men, the masses made a splendid target for the riflemen in the tops. There were seven marines in the mizzentop of the Constitution, under an old sergeant who was noted for his skill as a marksman; six of them loaded, while he fired with the calmest deliberation shot after shot into the swarming English.

Captain Bush of the Marine Corps with the utmost gallantry sprang upon the taffrail to lead his marines, crying, "Board, Board!" A bullet went crashing through his skull, killing him instantly. Undaunted by the catastrophe, Aylwyn, the sailing-master, jumped upon the same spot, but a bullet from the Englishmen's maintop severely wounded him in the shoulder. Fairford had climbed up on the bowsprit with a view to lashing the two ships together, and had already taken a few turns of the mainbrace around the spar, when another bullet drove through his body, desperately wounding him, and he fell to the deck. Hull, with his sword in his hand, leaped upon an arm-chest and endeavored to spring upon the taffrail, when old Rhodes, the boatswain's mate, seized him roughly about the waist and held him back in

spite of his efforts with all the force of his mighty arms.

"Not with them swabs on, sir," cried the old sailor, alluding to the great bullion epaulets the captain wore; "it would be sure death for your honor."

As the captain, furious with rage, struggled in the arms of the stalwart seaman, the Constitution gathered way and drew ahead again. On the English vessel, the loss had been even more severe than on her enemy. The sailing-master and his mate had been desperately wounded; two of the junior lieutenants had been shot down, and Heathcote had been wounded. Most of the men in the forecastle had been killed or wounded, and the captain himself, while standing on the starboard forecastle hammocks encouraging his men, had been shot in the back by the marine sergeant in the mizzentop. Had the bullet passed a little more to the left, the wound would have proved fatal.

The roll of the ships prevented either party from successfully boarding, however, and at this juncture the two ships gathered way and parted. As the Constitution forged ahead turning to port slowly, the English ship, minus her after-sail, swung to starboard again, and aided by an unusually heavy sea, her bowsprit struck the quarter of the Constitution a mighty blow. The tremendous stroke carried away the loosened forestays of the English ship, and the shrouds on the port side having been all cut away by the withering fire to which she had been subjected, the weakened foremast, which had been previously wounded by a shot, immediately fell to starboard

across the mainstays. The sudden strain thus brought upon the mainmast, which was in little better condition than had been the fore, brought it down to starboard as well with a mighty crash; the massive spars beating and thundering against her weakened side in the rolling sea, completing by their battering ram onset her ruin.

The Guerrière was a perfect wreck, and the ship careened to starboard and fell off, exposing sheets of glistening copper far below the water line. The Constitution mercifully held her fire from the side of her hapless enemy, and although the enormous amount of wreckage was soon cut away, the English working with the energy of despair, yet their ship, completely deprived of motive power, was not under control, and at once fell into the trough of the sea, rolling and pitching there at the play of the waves, until she buried her maindeck guns in the water with every heave.

"What time is it, lad?" asked Hull of Midshipman Neill, who had rendered efficient service during the action.

"Twenty-two minutes after six o'clock, sir," was the reply.

"Less than thirty minutes of actual fighting time," remarked the victorious captain, *sotto voce*, counting from the time the Constitution's first broadside had been delivered. "I think I've won the hat.

"Mr. Neill, jump below and ask the surgeon to send me a report of the casualties at once. Forward, there. . . . Pass the word for the carpenter and sailmaster to advise me as to the damage we have sustained. Mr. Read, you will act as first lieutenant

until poor Fairford recovers. We 'll run off a little and heave to, overhaul the gear and repair damages; in case we should be compelled to meet another of these gentry, we must be prepared for them."

"And how about the prize, sir?" asked Read, respectfully.

"She 'll stay where she is until we get ourselves to rights, I think," said Hull, smiling.

About seven bells in the second dog watch, or half after seven o'clock, the Constitution, her colors flying proudly, filled away, wore around, and came down across the bows of the hapless English ship again. The British sailors had rigged an ensign to the stump of the mizzenmast. As the Constitution came into position with her mighty battery prepared to rake again, — the ship being practically uninjured in any material way and ready to engage another English vessel on the moment, having replaced the few unimportant spars which had been lost and with the cut ropes and torn sails hastily spliced and patched, or shifted, — the English fired a lee gun and slowly and reluctantly the ensign fell to the deck. The battle was over. One of the cutters was called away by Hull's directions and Lieutenant Read was sent to take possession of the prize.

It was a rather hard row from the Constitution to the Guerrière on account of the heavy sea, but finally the cutter rounded to off the lee side of the enemy.

CHAPTER XIV

A Lost Wager

ONE can scarcely imagine the shame and humiliation in Captain Dacres' heart. The English Navy could point to thirty years of continuous warfare with all the world, and in over two hundred desperate encounters between single ships with anything like equality of force, the losses could be counted upon the fingers of a single hand; and now to have to surrender to an American — to a despised American — to whom he had personally expressed his entire confidence in his own ship, and his contempt for the other! It was almost more than Captain Dacres could bear. Not the slightest doubt of the issue of the combat had ever crossed his mind. As soon as he had determined that the approaching ship was an enemy, he had looked upon her as already a prize. Strange to say, he had expressed himself that afternoon, while watching the manœuvres of the Constitution before the action to the effect "that she comes down a thought too boldly for an American," following up this sapient remark by this undoubtedly true reflection: "However, the better he behaves the more honor we shall gain by taking him." He closed his address to his crew before the battle with these significant words, —

"There is a Yankee frigate; in forty-five minutes she is certainly ours. Take her in fifteen and I promise you four months' pay!"

Alas for his anticipations! thirty minutes after the battle began he was the most surprised and chagrined man upon the ocean.

"What ship is that?" demanded Read from the boat, when he finally reached the Guerrière.

"His Britannic Majesty's Ship Guerrière," answered a weak voice, as a tall figure showed itself above the rail.

"Have you struck, sir?" called Read.

"I don't know that it would be prudent to continue the engagement any longer," was the reply.

"Do I understand you to say that you have struck?" asked Lieutenant Read a second time.

"Not precisely," said Dacres, "but I don't know that it will be worth while to fight any longer."

"If you will not decide, I will return aboard my ship and resume the engagement," returned the American officer. To this Captain Dacres called out somewhat excitedly, —

"Why, I am pretty much *hors de combat* already. I have hardly enough men left to work a single gun and my ship is in a sinking condition."

"I wish to know, sir," peremptorily demanded Lieutenant Read, "whether I am to consider you as a prisoner of war or an enemy. I have no time for further parley."

"If I could fight longer I — I — I — would with pleasure; but — but — I must — surrender," Captain Dacres replied with evident reluctance, "I believe there is no alternative."

"Give way, lads," said Read, at this most satisfactory termination of the little colloquy, and the boat was sent alongside of the gangway, where he climbed aboard to take possession. What a picture the doomed ship presented; what a contrast to her appearance an hour ago, when with spars that searched the skies and with sails that extended out like the wings of a gigantic bird, she proudly rode the sea.

Now she rolled, a helpless, sinking hulk, a picture of ruin and destruction, blood-stained water gushing from her scuppers at every roll; her sides broken and battered by the Constitution's heavy shot; her bulwarks and rails smashed from the same cause, and from the impact of the falling spars; three jagged, upright pieces of timber showing where the masts had been. Many of her guns were dismounted and destroyed; some of them had broken loose and were swinging wildly to and fro; nearly one third of her crew had been killed and wounded, many were missing, probably carried overboard by the falling masts and drowned; all of her boats were lost or destroyed; and, in short, she was a complete wreck.

Stepping aft to the quarter-deck, where Dacres, weak and faint from his wound, was sitting on an arm-chest despondently surveying his crew, who had abandoned all effort to clear the ship and were hanging about in melancholy silent groups examining their antagonist, Read saluted him with a profound respect, which seemed to touch the unfortunate Englishman, who opened the conversation by asking:

"Is that the Constitution?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is she still commanded by Captain Hull?"

"Yes, sir."

Thereupon Dacres showed his manliness. Instead of handing his sword to Lieutenant Read, and pleading his severe wound as an excuse for not delivering it to Captain Hull in person, he remarked, —

"If you will allow me the use of your boat, I will go aboard your ship and surrender my sword to Captain Hull."

So pitiful was the condition of Captain Dacres, that Read ventured to remonstrate.

"Would it not be better for you to remain here for the present, Captain Dacres, in view of the wound from which you are suffering?"

"My lad," said the elder man, looking at the younger one kindly, and pointing toward his wounded back, "it is not this wound that causes me the suffering. No, I will go. It is only justice to your captain."

Having descended to the boat, he was soon aboard of the Constitution. As he climbed the side with slow and painful steps he was tenderly assisted as much as possible by the officers and men. Captain Hull met him in the gangway.

"I see you are wounded, Dacres," he said kindly. "Give me your hand."

"Sir," said Dacres, formally, "my ship has surrendered, and I have come to deliver to you my sword," and he extended it toward the American.

"No, no," said Hull, generously waiving it away, "I will not take a sword from one who knows so well how to use it." Then he added, with a merry twinkle in his eye, and laying his hand on Dacres' shoulder: "But, Dacres, I will take that hat."

"Very well, captain," replied the other, making a gallant attempt to enter into the spirit of the claim; "you shall have the hat, and, if mine will fit you, I believe I will offer to lend you a pair of trousers as well."

"Gad!" said Hull, looking down at his small-clothes, which were waving in the breeze, "I forgot all about them until this minute."

"It is the only wound you have sustained, I trust," said Dacres. "And the ship seems to be in equally good condition," he added, after thoughtfully surveying the Constitution.

"Shall I send our surgeon or his mate over to look after your people?" asked Hull, as they walked arm in arm to the quarter-deck.

"Why, have n't you need of them yourself?" answered Dacres, greatly surprised.

"No, all of ours have been attended to an hour ago."

"How many were your casualties?"

"Seven killed and seven wounded," was the reply.

"Send them over if you will," said Dacres, mournfully, throwing up his hands, "we have seven times as many. By the way, there are ten Americans on board."

"Are any of them wounded or killed?" said Hull, anxiously.

"No, I allowed them to go below before we began the action; I would not compel them to fight against their flag," answered the chivalrous Englishman.

"That was handsomely done, and I thank you in behalf of my countrymen," replied Hull, with deep feeling.

"To think that you are practically unharmed both in ship and crew," Dacres added, after they had entered the cabin, "and that we are a wreck. You will never take her into port though. The carpenter tells me we received as many as thirty shots as low as five sheets of copper below the bends on the engaged side. To think of it, to think of it!" he continued mournfully, sitting down before the table and leaning his head upon his hands. "To have struck my flag, and to an American!"

"Never mind, Dacres," said Hull, encouragingly, "you won't be the last one to strike his flag to an American in this war, I'll wager."

"I've had enough of your wagers, Hull," answered the Englishman, with a rueful smile.

CHAPTER XV

Brothers United

WHILE this conversation had been going on, the boats of the Constitution had been called away, and the transfer of prisoners was begun, and a large prize crew from the heavily manned American ship was making strenuous efforts to fit the Guerrière for service, so that she might be brought to the United States. The first boat-load of prisoners contained Lieutenant Richard Heathcote, carrying his arm in a sling from a slight wound he had received while gallantly assisting the captain in rallying the men on the forecastle. The first question he asked when he reached the quarter-deck was for the welfare of his brother.

"I saw him jump on our bowsprit when the two ships came together, then he fell back and I missed him. Where is he? I do not see him."

"Unfortunately, he was desperately wounded at that period of the action, a bullet having passed through his body," replied the officer of the deck.

"May I not see him?" asked Heathcote, eagerly.

Having received permission from the surgeon, in a short time he was standing in the little cabin occupied by the first lieutenant of the ship. Fairford, who had lost much blood from his wound, was lying in his berth with his eyes closed. There was a fierce flush of fever upon his sunken cheeks, and his mind had

wandered far away from the present scene. As Heathcote looked at him, he heard him murmuring disconnectedly, and bent his head to listen.

"Margaret . . . Margaret . . . I wish I had taken the rose," the weak voice muttered.

Richard, full of alarm, laid his hand gently on his brother's shoulder.

"Blake," he said softly to the sick man, who opened his eyes and gazed at him dully.

"You, Dick," he answered feebly, after a time, his eye brightening as he collected his scattered senses under the stimulus of his brother's appeal. "What have you done with that rose she gave you?" he added, still a little dazed by the situation.

"I lost it . . . forgot it . . . left it behind, I am sorry to say," was the smiling and somewhat shamefaced reply.

"Then you did not love her?"

"Not I, charming though she is."

"And that foreign dance, that waltz, Dick?"

"I am sorry for that, too, Blake, and I am sorry for the other things as well. I want to take back what I said about your ships and your flag."

"That's all right," said the latter, extending his hand, "and you forgive me for the shot I would n't take?"

"Of course," responded Heathcote, promptly clasping the proffered hand, though he added bitterly: "you got it in with a whole ship's broadside instead of with a single pistol."

"Don't take this so hard, brother," said Fairford, tenderly, "ours is the heavier ship, you know. Other things being equal, we were bound to win."

"Yes," was the reply, "but the fact that other things were equal, nay, more than equal, is what makes it hard. Blake, I shall get a ship when I get back to England, if you let us back, and I swear to you that I'll take a leaf out of your own books. The mother has often found it necessary to learn from the child before, and I'll have a ship and a crew with which to meet the best of you some day, and that soon."

"No doubt, no doubt, Dick. I shall probably get one too, when I return. God send the two ships do not meet."

"Ay," replied the other, "I say amen to that, but if they do . . ."

"I will not withhold my fire at that time," said Fairford.

"And we 'll be brothers still," answered Heathcote, smiling, "in spite of all that happens."

During the night after the battle, a strange sail was reported on the Constitution, and the men were at once called from their needed rest to their quarters again. The ship was as ready for action as if she had not fought a battle, but the sail speedily drew out of sight. The Constitution remaining near her prize, of course, did not pursue.

When the day dawned it was quite evident from the appearance of the Guerrière that her condition was hopeless. The officer in charge hailed to say that she had four feet of water in her, and she was making water fast. Captain Dacres' melancholy prognostication was correct, it would not be possible to bring her in. The prize crew had worked assidu-

ously to save her all night long, but with no success; and after a thorough investigation by his more experienced officers, upon the strength of their report Hull reluctantly decided to set her on fire and destroy her; with four feet of water in the hold, she might sink at any moment.

The rest of the day was employed in transferring the balance of the prisoners and the wounded men, with their personal belongings, and other portable property, to the Constitution. Trains were then laid to the powder magazine of the ill-fated Guerrière and the torch was about to be applied, when Hull with the exquisite courtesy and consideration he had shown at every stage since the capture, asked Dacres if there was anything else on the ship that he desired brought away before she was destroyed.

"My mother's Bible," said Dacres, gratefully; "it will be found in my cabin, in the upper drawer of my desk."

So the Book of love was the last thing removed from the ship of war by the conquerors. When it was placed in the hands of the conquered, his eyes suffused with not unmanly tears. This action was not unprophetic of the future, for by and by, out of that strife between the mother and the daughter countries, like the Book from the cabin, came an honorable peace based upon mutual concession and mutual respect, never since broken, and which in the closing years of the century has blossomed into a flower of unity and harmony among the Anglo-Saxons, which is the pride of the age, and is the best augury for the peace of the world in the future.

The torch was then applied to the Guerrière.

The Constitution drew off a suitable distance and hove to, to wait for the end. The English officers and prisoners clustered about the rails, as they were permitted to gaze upon their ship. The flames spread rapidly, and some of the guns left shotted were discharged by the heat; until with this wild and mournful salute of farewell from her own batteries, a little after six bells in the afternoon watch, she blew up.

"When she was launched," said Captain Dacres to himself, "she sailed under the tri-color of France, then we captured her in fair fight, now she is gone down under the red flag of ruin. Who would have thought it? What an end to a great career! Who would have thought it!" he added bitterly, turning toward the cabin, followed by his officers. There was no cheering. The chivalrous Americans stood up in silence, out of respect to his grief. The Constitution was alone upon the ocean.

The first blow had been struck for the freedom of the sea.

CHAPTER XVI

Captain Hull's Reward

TEN days later the Constitution reached Boston, and entering the lower harbor, anchored off the lighthouse. The day being Sunday, Captain Hull remained quietly at his anchorage and did not bring the ship up to the city. However, the news of his successful battle was carried on shore by the first boat which spoke with him.

Though it was Sunday in a Puritan land, the people could not restrain their joy; a Yankee ship built in their own shipyards, and under a Yankee captain, had met the detested enemy in the shape of that hateful scourge of the seaboard — the Guerrière — and in less than half an hour of actual battle, had not only captured, but had destroyed her.

On Monday morning, with the national colors flying from every masthead, and bedecked with flags, and with the British ensign below the stars and stripes, Old Ironsides came up to the city; and, amid the booming of cannon, and frantic cheers from the men crowded upon the gaily dressed ships in the harbor, gracefully and with becoming dignity, as if conscious of her honor, moved to her anchorage. The wharves and streets and buildings overlooking the bay were filled with people mad with excitement, and when Hull stepped ashore, he received such an enthusiastic

welcome from the inhabitants of the profusely decorated town, as has rarely been accorded to a citizen of the Republic.

The news came in the nick of time. General Hull, who was singularly enough an uncle of the doughty captain of the Constitution, had just surrendered Detroit and the whole territory of the Mississippi without a blow; the garrison at Fort Dearborn had been massacred by the Indians; the English armies had crossed the northern and western frontiers, and undeterred by the feeble opposition of the raw American militia levies were advancing toward the interior in every direction. The joy of the people of the country when the news of Hull's mighty victory spread among them, as it did with marvellous rapidity, was unparalleled. Honors, swords and pieces of plate were showered upon the officers and crew, and banquets and feasts galore were tendered to them. Congress voted medals to the officers, many of whom were promoted, and fifty thousand dollars prize money to be divided among the officers and crew.

Fairford, aided by youth and health and his brother's careful nursing, had recovered somewhat from his wound, and was given a promotion and a leave of absence with an assurance of the command of the first sloop-of-war vacant. He did not return to Virginia, but waited in Boston for his promised command. The two most acceptable things which came to Captain Hull, who generously yielded the further command of the Constitution when he might have retained it, to a brother officer, Commodore Bainbridge, were not bestowed either by Congress or the public generally.

One was found in the report of Captain Dacres to the British Admiralty. In it he said: —

"I feel it my duty to state that the conduct of Captain Hull and his officers to our men has been that of a brave enemy, the greatest care being taken to prevent our men from losing the slightest trifle, and the greatest attention being given to the wounded."

A friendship sprang up between these two gallant seamen, which lasted until death had parted them.

The other came to him in the shape of a message from the young woman of whom he had spoken to Fairford the night of the interrupted duel.

"How delightful," she is reported to have said to one whom she knew would carry her words to the captain — "how delightful it must be to be the wife of a hero!"

Captain Hull after due deliberation concluded that he had spoken unadvisedly when he declared that a sailor's best bride was his ship, and Fairford had the privilege of being best man at his wedding several months after.

At the wedding the doughty captain carried a brand new chapeau, and the curious might have seen these words traced on the band inside the cocked hat, —

"Compliments of R. Dacres, London."

Book III

THE EPIC OF THE WHIP

CHAPTER XVII

The Pieces Are Set

TWO years had elapsed since the famous victory of the Constitution over the Guerrière. During this period, the ship to which Blakely Fairford had been assigned as commander had been securely blockaded in one of the harbors on the Maine coast, and, save for a spirited repulse of a heavily armed cutting-out expedition, his service had been one of ceaseless watchfulness and wearing inactivity.

Early in the year 1814 he had applied for the command of the new frigate Narragansett, 36, then nearing completion at the Navy Yard near Washington. His request had been granted after due deliberation; but, unfortunately, the day he received the orders detaching him from his blockaded cruiser, and assigning him to the command of the Narragansett, the British under General Ross, with the co-operation of a powerful fleet under Admiral Cockburn, which had held well-nigh undisputed control of the Chesapeake since the year began, defeated the American troops at Bladensburg, captured and burned Washington, and carried away the Narragansett. The ship had just been completed, and was filled with stores and ammunition for a long cruise.

Awaiting the arrival of her new captain, who was to bring a large detachment of men with him, she

had but a small crew on board, which had not been able to make any effective resistance to the British attack. An attempt to destroy her before the enemy took possession had failed, owing to the general panic and disgraceful disorganization everywhere prevalent. As the invaders withdrew at once from Washington, in order to prosecute their attack upon Baltimore, the Narragansett, with a prize crew aboard, under the command of Captain Henry Cunningham, late commander of the Lion, who had been invalided home, had dropped down the Potomac, and had anchored off the west shore of the Chesapeake Bay. As luck would have it, she lay a mile or two below Colonel Barrett's place, where she remained for a short period.

Sir James and Evelyn Heathcote had gone aboard of her the day of her arrival to take passage for England. After the declaration of war, Sir James' business affairs in Virginia, where as the guest of Colonel Barrett he had remained unmolested, and a serious illness early in the year had prevented his return when it was practicable; after that, various other considerations had concurred to detain him in America, until, owing to the activity of the American war vessels and privateers, which were sweeping the seas in every direction, it would have been dangerous to attempt a return in anything other than a heavily armed cruiser. He had gladly welcomed the advent of the British fleet and army, and eagerly availed himself of Captain Cunningham's offer of a passage home in his ship.

The presence of Sir James Heathcote in America had not been without avail to the Barretts, for by

his influence and position he had been able to secure the immunity of the plantation of his friend, as well as that of his wife, from the ravages of the British marauders, who had lately infested the land, — burning, plundering, and outraging in every direction, looking upon the undefended counties of the Chesapeake as their pleasant gardens from which they took what they would.

Life in the midst of stirring times elsewhere had flowed by peacefully, therefore, for the colonel and his daughter. That somewhat immature but precocious young lady had rounded and developed into a woman, both in character and in person. Social gayeties had, of course, been largely intermitted since the war began, most of the young men having gone into the service of their country; and the two girls, Evelyn and Margaret, had enjoyed abundant opportunity to dream uninterruptedly of the absent sailors to whom they had given their hearts.

The tedium of their hours had been lightened by a visit from Richard Heathcote, who had been allowed, through Colonel Barrett's influence, this privilege on his parole, during his brief stay in this country as a prisoner of war before he had been exchanged. There were no waltzes and flirtations on this occasion, and the tacit understanding which had existed betwen Evelyn and himself was formally ratified by an engagement based upon their mutual affection.

Richard had carried messages of affection to Colonel Barrett, and others of a more formal character to his daughter, from Fairford, in response to which Margaret had written in a friendly, sisterly

way, which was very far from expressing her true feeling, as often as limited and frequently interrupted postal facilities permitted. Fairford replied to her letters in a similar spirit.

There had been no other communication between them, however, and matters still continued in a most unsatisfactory condition. Margaret, womanlike, trusted and dreamed and hoped, while Fairford, by determined attention to his duties, constantly strove to resist the ever-increasing tension upon his heartstrings, which the thought of her produced.

When Fairford received his orders to take command of the Narragansett, he had immediately started for Washington with a picked body of a hundred seamen, who had been with him for several years, including, in their number, old Joseph Rhodes, the boatswain's mate, and Master Billy Cotton, the youngster who had been so zealous for his prize-money on the Constitution, with several other veterans from that ship. Ludlow, his intimate friend, had been appointed his first lieutenant, and accompanied them.

They reached Baltimore in time to take part in repelling the attack upon that city, and it was there that they learned of the capture of the Narragansett, and her present position off the mouth of the Potomac. Fairford at once conceived the bold design of cutting her out. A careful reconnoissance which he made with a small boat soon after his arrival, disclosed the fact that she was moored head and stern about two cables' length from the other English ships, — a man-of-war brig of eighteen guns, and a new forty-four gun frigate which the English

had built after the Constitution's model, to cope with the heavy American frigates.

The second night after his observations, as there was no moonlight, he selected for the attempt. He had not yet had time to communicate his arrival to Colonel Barrett and his family, as he most assuredly would have done under other circumstances; and they were not aware of his presence in their vicinity. His prompt decision to cut out the ship at once was most fortunate, as it happened, for the Narragansett was under orders to get away for England on the day following the night selected for the boat expedition. She had been delayed for a specific cause.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Sentence of the Court

IN the cabin of the captain of the Narragansett the captains of the three ships and several other officers in full uniform were seated at one end of a table. At the other end three men, heavily handcuffed and strongly guarded by marines, were standing. The first was one William Badely, an Englishman, once a member of the crew of His Britannic Majesty's late lamented ship Guerrière; the other two were John and Samuel Martin, father and son, the Gloucester fishermen, sometime members of the crew of His Britannic Majesty's ship Lion, once commanded by Henry Cunningham, who was now in command of the Narragansett prize, and who sat at the head of the table.

These officers comprised a court-martial which had tried these three deserters who had been captured with the Narragansett, to which they had been ordered by a scurvy trick of fate. They had previously finished their deliberations, but had been reassembled, and the prisoners had been summoned to hear their sentences, which had been received back that morning from Admiral Cockburn, commanding the fleet in the Chesapeake.

"William Badely, stand forth," said Cunningham, the president of the court, with much solemnity, at

the same time standing up himself and putting his cocked hat upon his head, and laying his hand upon his sword, "and hear the sentence of this honorable court, which has been approved by the admiral commanding the fleet. The sentence is, that you be hung from the yard-arm of the Narragansett prize, at two bells in the first dog-watch, this day, October 1st, 1814; there to hang until sunrise the next morning, as a warning to the crews of His Majesty's ships in these waters, for desertion and for bearing arms in the service of the enemy; and may God have mercy on your soul!"

Badely, though not deficient in the ordinary courage of his station, turned as white as a sheet at this terrible announcement, which was received in deep silence by the others in the cabin. Moistening his lips nervously with his tongue, he endeavored to speak, and finally gave utterance in a hoarse whisper.

"For God's sake, sir, your honor, give me another chance. I didn't ship willin' on the Gurreer, sir. I was pressed the very night I was married," he went on, piteously stretching forth his manacled hands, "an' I ain't never seen my wife since the day I left her swoondin' on the beach. So help me God, I never meant no harm by leavin' the ship. Oh, good, kind gentlemen," he continued, his wild gaze turning toward the faces of the other members of the court, as he recoiled before Cunningham's impassive, contemptuous glance, "you wouldn't go for to make a poor sailor man wot knows nothin' about the rights and wrongs of this matter, slip his cable an' sail into the presence of his Maker, without no more chance than four hours leaves him for

to get ready in? Oh, please, sir, if you have a wife of your own, an' love life an' freedom," he begged, with rude eloquence, turning to Cunningham again, his voice gaining strength, "give me another chance, your honor. I'll fight for you, I'll work for you — I'll do anything. For God's sake, sir, don't hang me like a dog."

"Enough of this," said Cunningham, harshly; "the sentence of the court will be carried out. The chaplain will visit you, and if you have any preparations to make you would better make them. Sergeant," he added, turning to the marine guard, "remove your prisoner." The blood came rushing into the face of Badely as he realized the hopelessness of his situation, and with it came that reckless indifference which often follows hard upon the heels of departing hope. Grinding his teeth with rage, he lifted up his hands, and, leaping forward, struck murderously at the captain.

"D—n your soul," he cried, while his frantic efforts to reach the officer were frustrated by the promptitude of the guards, who closed around him and seized him in a ruthless grasp, "if I could only get at ye, I'd tear the heart out of ye, ye bloody murderin' tyrant. May the curse of God come on ye for this day's work, and on King George, aye, and on his chaplain, too. I want none of them, ye — "

"Gag that man," quietly said Cunningham, who had not moved an inch during the onset; for though the Englishman was a tyrant, he was not a coward, — "and remove him."

Screaming frightful oaths and imprecations, and

struggling in a most terrible way, Badely was finally overpowered and dragged from the cabin.

Turning calmly to the other two prisoners, the captain continued: "The sentence of the court for the same offences, upon you, John Martin, is, that you receive three hundred lashes on the bare back with the cat-o'-nine-tails, at eight bells, noon, on this ship, this day; and that you, Samuel Martin, in consideration of your youth, receive one hundred and fifty lashes of the cat at the same time, and in the same place, and you may thank His Majesty's officers for their mercy and clemency in your case."

Samuel Martin, who was a slender, somewhat delicate young fellow, scarcely twenty-one years of age, turned pale and laughed wildly.

"Mercy!" he shrieked, — "you call one hundred and fifty lashes mercy!"

"Silence, sir," shouted Cunningham.

"By heaven," said the elder Martin, a man of the stoutest and strongest fibre, "you can't do it. You dare not! As I told ye, I am an American citizen, born in Massachusetts, and my son here as well. There 's not a man standing at that table but what knows it. Did you ever hear an Englishman talk as I do? I claim our rights, ye d—d murdering, kidnapping — "

"If you say another word, Martin," interrupted Cunningham, fiercely, "I 'll add another hundred lashes to your punishment; you 'll find out what we dare."

"You — " shrieked old Martin, when Cunningham continued, —

"And, on second thought, I won't add it to your own punishment, but to your boy's yonder."

At this fearful threat Martin's lips were sealed. Ever since the death of his wife at the birth of this child, his lonely life had held but one passion, — his son. He clenched his teeth together, and looked at Cunningham, who smiled slightly, in bitter triumph.

"It is a bad thing to cross me, as you have found out. It was a bad day when you deserted my ship, Master Martin — remember, no more words," he added, lifting a warning hand, as he saw the bitter struggle going on in the man's breast. He waited a moment to get the full effect of his triumph.

"Take them forward," he said, finally, with a low scornful laugh, which capped the climax, and added the last straw to the balance in which old Martin weighed his tormentor.

CHAPTER XIX

The Cat-o'-Nine-Tails

AS eight bells were struck forward, the shrill pipes of the boatswain and his mates were heard, followed by the hoarse cry: —

"All hands lay aft to witness punishment."

In obedience to this command, the expectant seamen came tumbling up from below, or lay down from the topgallant forecastle and ranged themselves forward of the mainmast in either gangway, according to their watches, facing aft. They were joking and laughing among themselves, eagerly anticipating the approaching spectacle, which they looked upon as a delectable amusement when not the objects of punishment themselves, so blunted were their sensibilities by that harsh and brutal treatment wrongly considered necessary to proper discipline.

A marine guard, lent by one of the other ships, was drawn up in lines on the poop-deck, facing forward, with their muskets charged and ready. The captain stood near the starboard gangway on the quarter-deck, facing the crew; the other officers, fully armed, Jamieson, the first lieutenant, at their head, formed a little group near the break of the poop, abaft of and at some distance from the captain. On the port side of the quarter-deck a heavy wooden

hatch grating had been thrown upon the deck in front of the cabin doors.

"Bring up the two prisoners," said the captain to the master-at-arms. "Mr. Jamieson, you will read the findings and sentence of the court-martial to the crew."

While the brief document was being read, the master-at-arms and his assistants brought the prisoners to the mast. The several boatswain's mates, who, for their strength, skill, and experience, had been selected to administer the brutal punishment, now rolled up the sleeves of their shirts, exposing their brawny arms, and each one took a new cat-o'-nine-tails, commonly called the cat.

This terrible instrument of punishment consisted of nine stout pieces of new quarter-inch manila rope, each about a yard long, usually with one end carefully whipped, and the other attached securely to a stout wooden handle. Sometimes each rope ended in a "Turk's head," a round hard knot, with other similar knots half way between the end and the handle.

"Which one shall we take first, sir?" said the master-at-arms.

"The old one," replied the captain; "we'll let him show his boy how to take it."

The two seamen holding the unfortunate Martin roughly strippd his shirt from him, and turned down his trousers slightly, exposing the whole range of his bare back. Then they started to drag him aft.

"I'll walk," said the man; "you don't have to drag me."

"Anxious to get there, are you?" sneered the

captain, tauntingly, with his handsome face flushed deeply, bespeaking the fact that he had been drinking, and was somewhat under the influence of the liquor he had taken, else he would never have descended to such undignified baiting. "You 'll be more anxious to get away from that grating presently, I fancy," he added, with his mocking laugh. That was the second time Martin had heard that laugh.

Not deigning to reply, and only shooting one glance of such determinate hatred and resolution in the captain's direction as might well have made him tremble, if he had been in his right senses, his arms still tightly clasped by his guards, who seemed to fear an attempt at escape, he walked to the grating. Ropes were brought, and his bare feet were tied securely to the heavy cross-pieces of the grating; his hands were triced up over his head, and lashed in the same way to another grating, which had been fastened to the break of the poop, leaving his back to the crew. The first boatswain's mate stepped to one side, shook out the cat, and then looked at the captain.

"Go on," said that officer.

In a silence which was absolute, the man threw the cat backward over his shoulder, and then raised his arm and brought it down squarely upon the white and naked back of the prisoned man. The nine ropes whizzed through the air, singing a song of hate and destruction. Then, with a dreadful sucking clasp, they bit eagerly into the smooth white flesh of the unfortunate man; the tender skin seemed to crisp and curl upon the mighty back, and broad red welts showed themselves from shoulder to

hip. The man shuddered slightly, but made no sound.

"One!" said the boatswain, who had been appointed to keep tally. The arm was raised again; this time the man sprang forward viciously, as if to make his own weight tell in the blow, and once more the lash fell upon the sailor. With a skill born of long practice, the boatswain's mate slightly checked the lash as it descended, and gave it a peculiar twisting, withdrawing motion; when it fell away it brought little pieces of flesh with it, and the blood spurted.

The man shuddered again, but kept silent, as before.

"Good," said the captain.

"Two!" counted the boatswain, impassively.

At twenty-five lashes, the man who had been officiating gave place to another, a left-handed man this time, who crossed the blows. At fifty lashes, the flesh on the back looked like raw meat freshly torn from a bleeding carcass.

The terrible punishment was almost more than the resolution of man could bear, yet not a single groan had escaped from the closed lips of the iron-hearted sailor. He stood leaning upon his suspended arms, convulsive shudders alone bespeaking life. His magnificent courage and resolution even evoked the admiration of the hardened crew, who had not been used to a silent reception of punishment of this kind; and murmurs were heard here and there among them, until they were silenced by the stern voice of the inflexible captain.

At the one hundred and fiftieth lash, physical nature could stand no more, and there was a sudden

collapse of body, not of will, which left the lacerated man hanging limply from the lashings which secured his hands.

"Belay there a moment," said the captain. "Some of you fetch a bucket of water," he continued, while the boatswain's mate combed out the knotted, intertwined strands of the bloody cat with his fingers.

"Dash it over him," he said.

As the cold salt water struck Martin's body and penetrated the ragged and bleeding wounds upon his back, consciousness returned, and before he had recovered full command of himself a low moan rose to his lips, which he stifled as soon as he realized the situation.

"Doctor," said the captain, with a wave of his hand to that functionary, "step forward and feel his pulse."

"He will safely stand a little more, I think, captain," replied the obsequious physician, after obeying the command. "Better finish out the second hundred, I should say, sir."

"Very good. That will leave one hundred more to be delivered when he gets over this — as a dessert for his meal," said the captain, brutally, nodding acquiescence.

This barbarous custom of deferring a portion of the punishment was frequently practised, in spite of the piteous importunities of the men, who had no wish to receive an additional lashing upon a half-healed and tender back, but usually preferred to take it all at once, at whatever present cost. Therefore, at the two hundredth lash Martin was unbound.

As he was turned about to face the officers and

crew, his face was scarcely less frightful in appearance than had been his raw and beaten back. A carelessly delivered blow — or, perhaps, a malicious one — had caused the lashes of the cat to reach his face, which was seamed with great red welts. The knotted end of one lash had struck him fairly in the right eye, which the blow had beaten to a pulp. Blood dripped down upon his breast from his under lip, which he had bitten through and through in his effort at self-restraint, so that it now hung pendulous upon his chin. His sides were seamed by the overreaching ends of the lashes. He had stepped up to the gratings a splendid, stalwart man, in the prime of life and strength; he left it an old, bent, broken wreck — broken in body, not in spirit.

As he was turned, he staggered blindly, and would have fallen if it had not been for the assistance of the man who attended him. There was nothing about him that, to a casual inspection, indicated humanity or strength; even the baleful glance of his bloodshot but unwounded left eye was beast-like in its dull, stupid ferocity — the animal, for the moment, was uppermost.

"Shall we take him below, sir?" said the master-at-arms, carelessly sprinkling the man's back with a handful of salt.

"No," said the captain, brutally, "let him stay by the mast there, so he can get a full view of how his whelp takes it. I'll break the will of the mutinous dog before I get through with him," he said to himself, muttering fiercely in his disappointment at Martin's prodigious self-control.

CHAPTER XX

The Song of the Lash

UNABLE to stand alone, old Martin leaned heavily against the fife-rail about the mast, and his attendants released him as now beneath contempt. When he had gone aft to receive the cruel and undeserved punishment a few moments since, his mind had been so full of the bitter outrage that was to be done not only to his citizenship, but to his manhood as well; his being was so pervaded with the keenest sense of the bitter injustice and glaring wrong of it all; and his soul was so filled with rage at the author of his misery, and of the tyrannical system he represented, and the consciousness of his own impotent helplessness, — that he ground his teeth together, and scarcely felt the first blow of the cat.

But those blows succeeded each other in such rapid succession, falling again and again with an ever-increasing pain upon the same portion of his body, that the mental anguish he had suffered gradually faded away in the dreadful present stroke of that hydra-headed, snake-like whip. His nervous system responded so keenly to the terrible demands made upon it by his bodily agony, that all the thinking power he had left merged itself in one supreme

effort to keep silent. He thought of nothing but how to suffer and make no sound.

Oh, the torture of those whistling lashes! The familiar objects near him swam redly before his vision as he stared at them. He forgot what he was — where he was — what was happening; but one thing remained to him, — he must not shriek, nor moan, nor sob, nor cry aloud; he was to be silent, no matter what occurred. He concentrated his will upon that idea, and clung to it with a tenacity of resolution, unbreakable. He was long past tears. Tears are for the feeble — for the little sorrow — for the easy pain.

Presently he found himself at the focus of a vast whirling vortex of wild, lurid sensations. The world was strangely silent to him, save for a fierce singing, whistling sound, like the beating wings of a bird rushing madly through the air — the song of the lash! By and by the unbearable physical pain seemed to grow gradually less. There was no respite for him in the torture, however, — a more intolerable agony succeeded. Strange things took the place of the whip, and caused him even more suffering. One was a rough hammering sound. Beat! — beat! — beat! — it said, in the silence which surrounded the vast whirlpool of which he was the centre. Beat! — beat! — beat! It seemed to rise up and strike him in the throat and choke him. He could not know that it was his own wild heart.

The whip caressed him now. Its stroke seemed as soft and tender as the kiss of a baby's lips, or the touch of a falling leaf. He would have enjoyed the exquisite pain, but another sound denied him

that privilege. It was a far-off voice. It counted — counted — counted — with damnable iteration. What was it counting? that beating, hammering thing? Count — beat — stroke! The whole world grew black to him. The vortex rose up in mighty waves, and overwhelmed him. He drifted away in delicious languor — to sleep. Was it sleep?

There was a sudden awakening. Something sharp seemed to ring in the hollow of his fretted ear like a blow, like the high piercing note of a silver bell heard in the still night. The red mist wavered before him once more. What was that? — the beat, the count, the blows — *again!* The short respite had brought back the agony. He longed to shriek and curse and blaspheme, but he dimly remembered that for some reason he was to keep his lips closed and be still.

By and by it stopped — the counting, the beating, the lash, which had screamed like an evil bird of prey, — they all stopped. An appalling silence fell upon him.

CHAPTER XXI

The Judgment of God

HE was turned about and supported. The blinding light of the noonday sun fell full in his face; it was daytime, then! He could only see dimly with one of his eyes. He staggered, and would have fallen. He felt himself half carried, half dragged forward, and placed against some solid support. Was it over?

The gentle autumn breeze blew across his face. Realization began to come to him, and with it a wild joy. He knew now that he had been beaten like a dog — nay, as no dog had ever been beaten — and because he was a man, and not a beast, he had not cried out. That was triumph, surely.

With returning mental clearness came returning physical consciousness. The fires of hell were burning upon his shoulders now; a hideous hot iron seemed to be turning about in his beaten eye. God! Was there, then, a God? How much longer could he bear it? He found himself mechanically clutching wood and ropes, and looking at a strange, curious figure seen dimly through the mists.

A figure covered with blue and gold, wearing a face handsome and mocking — a sinister, sneering smile upon his lips. The face of a god and the smile

of a devil. He stared, fascinated and forgetting. It was a strangely familiar sight. Where had he seen that smiling face? What was it smiling at? And then another sound broke upon his dulled ear, followed by that diabolical whistling sound; the lash was singing again, yet he felt no blows. What was it? A young voice, high and shrill — with agony — despair — torture — in its notes, — a reminiscent voice. It clutched at his heart like a vise. Where had he heard that voice before?

Ah, it came back to him with a mighty rush of recollection. There was a young woman lying on a bed there — white-faced and still — and clutching at the cold breast which rose and fell no more, a baby's hand; the child cried loud and shrill, and that smiling, mocking face looked on.

The picture faded. There was a little boy playing about his knee in a little home; the still, white-faced woman was gone forever; they were alone save for that insistent, smiling demon. Then before him rose a garden, overlooking the sea; the child was older; they walked side by side — with that sneering face with its hellish smile between them.

They sailed together on the sea; the child a man — God in heaven! What was that? That shriek? Whose was that bloody figure? What ship was this?

The man awoke; humanity regained the upper hand once more, the man witnessing the torture of the son whom he had loved better than his life. He knew what that terrible whip was like — he had just received its caresses. They mistake who say that it is only mothers who love their children; the

measure of love for humanity lies in the gift of a Father who sent his Son.

The man straightened out his arms and dragged himself painfully to his feet. Strength returned to him. He heard that shriek once more, and in the silence a low mocking laugh. He knew it now. The ship — the captain — he was the chosen instrument. "God have mercy upon us," he whispered, starting forward. Like the blind Samson in his hour of shame, his powers came back to him; God was with him.

As he struggled slowly to his feet, the lieutenant commanding the marines happened to glance at him. A moment before Captain Cunningham had stepped backward toward the opening in the bulwarks, and, looking at the hapless father, had laughed, sardonically, a third time. That was his last laugh.

Before he realized it, a blood-stained, hideous figure, its lurid face seamed and welted, with one eye gone — beaten into a shapeless pulp — but with the other looking hell into his own with burning glance, sprang upon him like a storm. Two mighty arms closed about him like a vise, crushing the life out of him with their tremendous pressure. A bold man was Captain Cunningham, and a hardy, but the spirit went out of him then; and in that fleeting moment he lived over some of the tortures he had inflicted upon his helpless fellow-men. Though the blood-boltered lips so near his own made no sound, a voice whispered to his soul, — "*Vengeance is mine; I will repay.*"

The marine officer, as Martin sprang upon the captain, seized a musket from the man next him, and

hastily giving the alarm, pulled the trigger. It was too late. The bullet buried itself harmlessly in the mainmast. No one dared fire again for fear of hitting the captain.

"Seize him, d—n him," thickly groaned Cunningham, fumbling weakly for his sword. They were his last words. The dazed officers and men sprang at the two. But old Martin was too quick for them. Raising the captain in his arms like a child, he leaped with him, still tightly clasped in that fearful embrace, through the open gangway. A little rope looped across the top of the entrance broke like paper — they were gone — gone forever from the sight of man. A rush through the air, a sullen splash, a ripple in the still water, a few bubbles on the surface — that was all.

CHAPTER XXII

The End of the Gospel of Force

YOUNG Martin was not made of the strong stuff of his indomitable father. He had received an heritage of weakness from his mother which had endeared him to his father's iron heart, but which ill-fitted him for experiences of this sort. A different ichor filled his veins, and a different spirit pervaded his body; the sight of his father during and after his flogging had almost undermined his courage. He nervously summoned all his resolution, however, and it was not until the fifth lash upon his thin and delicate shoulders that he gave way. The terrible shrieks and groans to which he gave utterance had added the last touch to the strain upon the overwrought old father, who, with the last remnant of his vital force, had extended judgment upon the captain.

From the time old Martin rose from the mast until they disappeared beneath the water, but a few seconds had elapsed.

"Man overboard! Every man to his station," shouted Jamieson, recovering himself with the promptitude of a sailor, as, after a moment of horrified surprise, the men came crowding aft. "Mr. Swaim, stand by with the marines. Lay aft the crew of the gig. Jump for life, men! Overhaul the

falls there. Mr. Price, go with them. Lower away." With incredible smartness the crew of the gig of the dead captain tumbled into the boat, Lieutenant Price took command, and the boat dropped to the water, and darted to the starboard side, where the two had gone overboard.

"Ready!" said the clear voice of the marine lieutenant, Swaim. "Take aim!" and the pieces of the marine guard came up to the shoulders, covering the crew with military precision. The crew, who had perhaps not intended any mutinous action, though one never knows what would happen if the iron rule of discipline were for a moment relaxed upon an English ship, were at once cowed by this prompt display of force, and settled back quietly to their stations as before. But the long moments wore away, and the captain and the sailor rose no more to the surface. The tragedy was complete. Justice had been done. Locked in each other's arms, they drifted out to the sea; and it may be, that, so clasped, they stood before the great judgment seat, each to plead his cause in person, in that final day when the king and the captain stand on the same rigid level with the peasant and the sailor, — where alone humanity finds equal justice and impartiality, for there alone is God.

"Go over and report this to the officer commanding the squadron. It 's useless to look any longer for them," finally called out Lieutenant Jamieson to the officer in charge of the boat which had been rowed carefully about the ship. "Meanwhile, I see no reason why we should not finish the punishment of the young one. Go on, bosun."

When the unfortunate young Martin was carried below, after he had received one hundred and fifty lashes, his constitution and nervous system had been shattered and ruined for life. He was delirious that night, and for several nights after; and when he recovered, he was like a harmless, broken-spirited child, mind and body irreparably wrecked.

At the appointed hour, in spite of what had occurred, the sentence of the court-martial was carried out upon the remaining prisoner; and the unfortunate Badely, shrieking and cursing, and struggling unavailingly as before, was run up to the foreyard-arm, where he slowly choked to death, and where he was left to hang, in ghastly warning, until the morning. In spite of his horrid death, it was hardly to be doubted that Fate had been more merciful to him than she had been to the other two.

The tale of Cunningham's death was long told in both services. As he had a reputation for ferocity and brutality unequalled, it was felt that there was a sort of rude retributive justice in the manner of his taking off.

NOTE. — The punishment accorded these three men was not considered in any way excessive, as desertion to the enemy and service under his flag, was one of the most serious breaches of discipline. As to flogging in general, it is of record, that, on a ship commanded by one John Surnam Carden, called the Macedonian, as late as 1811, a man received three hundred lashes with the cat in two different instalments, merely for having stolen a handkerchief, and that in despite of the fact that the charge was not clearly proven! It is a pleasure to add that Carden and his ship were captured a year later by Decatur and the frigate United States.

The English Navy maintained its control of the men by these

and other severe punishments. It had not been so long since men were keel-hauled; that is, fastened to a continuous rope which went from one yard-arm beneath the bottom of the ship up to the yard-arm on the other side, the unfortunate subject being dragged from one side to the other, until life was extinct. Men had been spread-eagled across the cut-water, when the ship was in motion, until they were beaten to death by the thrust of the ship upon the waves.

In these particulars, England, bad as she was, was yet more merciful than other continental nations. In the United States Navy, keel-hauling and spread-eagling, as I have alluded to them, were not permitted, and the use of the cat circumscribed by severe regulations. While there were undoubtedly some brutal and tyrannical officers in our service, the number was trifling; and as opportunities for the indulgence of their peculiar proclivities were so limited, it may be stated that there were little or none of the grosser forms of cruelty or oppression in the service.

In ruling her men, England, and the rest of the world as well, used the old gospel of force, while America used the new gospel of love. I do not mean to convey the idea that the relation between the officers and men of the American men-of-war was a sentimental one. The discipline was as it always should be, and must be in the naval service, — stern and severe; human beings are not made men without these things. And the obedience exacted was prompt and unquestioned, but the severity was tempered with mercy. The officers were considerate and careful, just and humane, to their crews to a remarkable extent in those ruder days; while the crews repaid them in almost every instance with a degree of devotion and attachment, which conduced greatly to the remarkable efficiency of the service. The honorable history of the United States Navy is disgraced by no record of mutiny induced by oppression, and the same cannot be said of any other nation.

There was every reason in the world why the American ships should win when matched against English ships in equal single combat. Some of the reasons have been stated, but the greatest of them all lay in this: that the gospel of love, even though it be ever so lamely exhibited, — and on a ship-of-war at that, — in the long run always triumphs over the gospel of force, be it

ever so fiercely proclaimed. Flogging has been entirely abolished in the United States Navy since the middle of the century, and in all other civilized navies as well.

The English sailor is treated as well as his American brother. The cat-o'-nine-tails has become archaic, and is now relegated to the collection of the curiosity seeker with the rack and the thumbscrew.

Book IV

A DASH FOR FREEDOM

CHAPTER XXIII

Captain Fairford Takes Command

SHORTLY after sunset the rain began to come down heavily and continuously, with ever-increasing force, beating upon the decks of the ships, and lashing the face of the water into foam; the wind rose until it blew a half gale, and the night fell dark and stormy. The ships strained and tugged at their anchors with restless uneasiness. Inasmuch as the only naval force in the bay, Commodore Barney's gunboats, had been destroyed, and the commodore himself desperately wounded, and with the larger part of his seamen taken prisoners after a most gallant defence (the only defence worthy of the name there) at the battle of Bladensburg, where they had efficiently served a heavy battery, the anchor watches upon the Narragansett, and upon the other ships as well, which were charged with looking after their welfare, were negligent and careless in the extreme.

The three large bateaux, crowded with the members of the picked crew, whom Fairford had brought with him, were able, favored by the darkness of the night, and by the wind which blew down the bay, and the tide just beginning to ebb, to pass by the two larger ships and approach the Narragansett unde-

tected. To bring the boats alongside without attracting attention was an operation that required the nicest skill. In this instance their efforts were attended with perfect success. Fairford, who commanded the largest boat, brought to upon the after cable; the second boat, commanded by Ludlow, the only other officer in the party, fastened upon the forward cable; while the third, intrusted to the guidance of that tried and veteran seaman, Rhodes, swung gently alongside the starboard gangway.

"Would n't a cracked a eggshell with that 'ere touch," muttered old Joseph, complacently, under his breath, as he waited for the time to go aboard.

It had been arranged that Fairford and his men should board from the stern first; the other two boat crews were to remain in their boats for a short time, or until they had slowly counted a hundred, when they were to come aboard from their positions with a rush, though with as little noise as possible, to prevent the alarm being given. When they got aboard each party had received definite instructions as to what it was to do. Even if successful, they could hope for only a few moments of time before they were seen from the other ships, and the quickest kind of work would be necessary if they were to get the Narragansett away.

Nothing avoidable had been left to chance. All the members of the cutting-out expedition, with the exception of the officers and the boatswain's mates, had been deprived of their pistols, and were armed only with cutlasses which had been sharpened to razor edge. The cutlass was a more silent weapon than the pistol at close quarters, and almost as sure.

The men were all barefoot, and for recognition in the darkness, by the captain's direction, each one had tied a white handkerchief about his head.

There was, as usual, a Jacob's ladder depending from the stern of the ship on either side. Fairford waited the appointed time, or until he was sure the other boats were at their stations. After having detailed two men to act as boat-keepers, at the last moment he appointed two others to remain on the Jacob's ladders, abreast the stern windows of the after cabin, with particular instructions to be followed out in case of a certain emergency. Then, taking off his boots in the boat, and taking his sword between his teeth, after giving a last whispered caution to his men to make no noise, he climbed softly up the ladder, followed by the men.

They soon gained the poop-deck of the unprotected frigate. In the thick darkness they could not see a soul upon her decks. There was a faint light streaming out from the hatch of the captain's cabin beneath their feet; and as Fairford cautiously looked through the glass, he saw several officers sitting about the table, Sir James Heathcote among them, to his great surprise, all engaged in earnest conversation. Quietly signalling to the bulk of his party to remain in readiness where they were until called, he descended to the main-deck, followed by several of the older men, cutlasses in hand, and stopped at the starboard gangway to meet the boatswain's mate, who, with his party, was soon standing upon the deck beside him.

The only Englishmen upon the deck were the two men of the anchor watch, who were standing on the

topgallant forecastle in the lee of the foremast. They were much astonished when powerful hands suddenly, and without warning, seized them from behind. Turning in quick surprise to see what was the matter, before either of them could cry out or give the alarm, one was promptly choked into insensibility by the firm grasp of Fairford's sinewy hands about his throat, and the other, receiving the knotty fist of the boatswain's mate full in the face, backed by all the force of that doughty gentleman's arm, fell like a log to the deck. So far the boarders had wonderful luck. Ludlow's men were signalled to, and now came pouring over the bow. The young captain spoke hurriedly: —

"Rhodes, take a dozen of your men to the gun deck, and cover the hatches securely to restrain the crew. Mr. Ludlow, detail some of yours to secure those who are quartered in the forecastle. Fasten the sliding doors and the hatches, if you can, and do not allow the crew to be awakened, if avoidable. I will attend to the wardroom and cabin. You will take the deck until I return. Send men aloft to loose the three topsails and the foresail, and get the ship under way. While the others are making sail, do you cut the cables and slip away. Let the boats go adrift." All this, which was but a rehearsal of previous directions, was said in a hurried whisper.

"Ay, ay, sir," responded Ludlow and Rhodes, as the captain ran aft, and the men, perfectly understanding the orders and their duties, quickly sprang to their appointed tasks. But the presence of nearly one hundred men upon the decks of the ship, in

spite of the noise of the rain, and every other precaution they had taken — and the seamen had moved about as quietly as cats — attracted the attention of some of the older British seamen forward, and they sprang from their hammocks with a vague sense of uneasiness, to see what had occurred. When they found the berth-deck hatches covered, and the sliding doors in the forecastle fastened, barring their escape from their quarters, they immediately realized that something was wrong, and began to pound on the doors and hatch covers with their fists, and immediately awakened the other sleepers with their hasty cries.

Some of Ludlow's men, in the meanwhile, had entered the wardroom by the companion hatch, and as the officers in their berths awoke in the confusion, each one found himself guarded by a resolute sailor with a drawn cutlass, who commanded him to lie still if he valued his life. All of them lay still. At the same moment Fairford entered the cabin, followed by the remainder of his men.

"Gentlemen," he said to the astonished officers, "you are my prisoners."

"Who are you, sir?" cried Jamieson, starting up, while Sir James threw up his hands in amazement, and exclaimed, —

"Mr. Fairford! How came you here?"

"My government," responded Fairford, smiling grimly, "appointed me captain of this ship, and I am come to take command. I hope I find you well, Sir James?"

At this moment, after a quick look of intelligence between Jamieson and another officer, each

one sprang at the after-cabin window nearest him. Jamieson threw open the sash and called loudly, —

"Ahoy the — "

He never finished the sentence, for a bullet from Fairford's pistol silenced him forever. The other officer, as the Americans rushed around the table toward him, seeing the fate of his superior, made no attempt to cry out, hoping to save a shot; but, jumping upon the transom, tore open the sash, and endeavored to leap through the port, trusting that if he could once get into the water he could escape in the darkness, or, in any event, give the alarm. But the sailor outside, upon the Jacob's ladder, who had been stationed there in anticipation of this very contingency, and whose attention had been attracted by the report of the pistol, was ready for the man.

He was not placed conveniently for striking; but, as he saw the officer's head and shoulders silhouetted against the brilliant light of the window, his arm shortened, and he drove the cutlass home in the side of the man's neck. Almost before his pursuers reached him, the Englishman's muscles relaxed, and he fell limply across the transom, half in and half out of the port, blood pouring from his wounds. In a few seconds he was dead. The other officers had been roughly seized by the excited sailors, and Fairford was now master of the ship.

"Sir James," he said to that gentleman, "what are you doing here?"

"I am going back to England."

"Not on this ship — if I know it," answered Fairford.

"Won't you set me ashore, then?"

"I must get away first. I am rather pressed for time, you see," was the reply.

At this moment the door of the port cabin opened, and Evelyn Heathcote, who had been awakened by the shot and the confusion, came forth into the light, arrayed in a white dressing-robe.

"Good heavens, a woman! Miss Heathcote! Is she aboard as well?" exclaimed Fairford in astonishment and dismay; and then, mindful of the duties devolving upon him, while a frightened shriek burst from the startled English girl as she saw the dead body of Jamieson at her feet, he rushed back to the deck.

The hatches which confined the men below had been opened a little, and a few vigorous threats from the boatswain's-mate to the effect that their captors would open fire if the prisoners did not keep silent had the effect of quieting them. The shrouds were shaking under the feet of the men swarming aloft to make sail; but the noise and confusion had, of course, grown louder and louder with every passing moment, and Jamieson's hail and Fairford's shot had at last attracted the attention of the men upon the other ships. The boat-keepers in the bateaux had hastily passed on board the things which had been left with them when the attack began; the cables were cut, the boats cast off, and the ship began to drift slowly out with the ebb tide.

At this moment a voice from the large frigate hailed. No answer to this hail was made on the Narragansett. A moment later the flapping of the heavy canvas above them showed that the men aloft

had accomplished their task. They had loosed sail with incredible swiftness, in the emergency, not taking time to cast off the gaskets, but had cut them with their sheath knives. Suddenly a bright flare was made on the forecastle of the English frigate.

The light from some inflammable substance plainly discovered the situation of the Narragansett. Sharp words of command were heard instantly from both of the English ships, followed by the rapid roll of their drums calling their crews to quarters. Their cables were cut at once, and a shift of the helm, as the larger one slowly gathered way, brought the bow guns to bear on the Narragansett, and the roar of their discharge broke the stillness of the night. All necessity for secrecy and quietness was, of course, at an end.

"Down from aloft! Down for your lives, men!" shouted Fairford. "Lead along the main topsail halyards; man the sheets; jump, my hearties; hands by the foresheets there; overhaul the brails forward; tend the braces; sheet home; hoist away!"

The crew, making up in zeal and excitement for what they lacked in numbers, soon mastheaded the ponderous yard, the sheets were hauled home, the foresail came down with a run. Next they tailed on to the gear of the fore and mizzen topsails, then of the spanker and jib, and finally of the main topgallant sail. The wind was already blowing a half gale, growing stronger with every moment; and though the royal yards were not crossed, it was doubtful if she could have borne even the other top-

gallant sails, or whether much would have been added thereby to her speed.

By Fairford's direction, every light was at once extinguished, and the Narragansett, having obtained a good start, soon disappeared from the view of her pursuers, who had ceased firing, and made sail with surprising swiftness. Though the British had lost sight of the chase, they knew she must continue down the bay, and they hoped either to overhaul her speedily, or else drive her into the hands of those British ships which were always cruising about the mouth of the bay.

So far Fairford had been favored in the most extraordinary way by good fortune; but his chances of escape, under ordinary circumstances, were about one in a thousand. In an undermanned ship, with more prisoners than his own crew numbered, totally unfamiliar with the ship itself and her plan, shut up in enclosed waters, filled with ships of the enemy, his undertaking was, indeed, desperate, and the prospect of success a dark one. Matched against these odds were the indomitable nature of the young sailor, — his rare skill, the ability and experience of Ludlow, his second in command, the devotion of her crew, the reputed sailing capacity of the new Narragansett, her bottom clean from the shipyard, his own knowledge of the bay, and his own resolution not to be captured. When an unexpected, though apparently a feeble ally, was thrown into the balance, like the mouse which gnawed the net restraining the lion, in the prospect before them appeared a slight gleam of hope.

CHAPTER XXIV

A Letter and its Answer

A LOW fire, to dispel the dampness of the rainy night, was burning upon the broad hearth of the little reception-room opening out of the great hall in Colonel Barrett's house. The colonel himself was seated in his great arm-chair near the table, upon which a pair of lighted candelabra were standing. He was dressed with his usual care, though he looked older and thinner than the night of the duel. He was reading from a ponderous tome, and his right foot, swathed in bandages until it looked preternaturally huge in the flickering firelight, was extended upon a rest before him.

It was very late, but the colonel could not sleep, and his daughter was keeping him company. The colonel had the gout, and, like every other individual afflicted with that painful disease, he endeavored to console himself with the reflection that it was the most aristocratic of ailments. No great degree of comfort did he find in this consideration, however, and it was only by the exercise of the most intense self-control that he refrained from crying out.

The colonel was a gentleman of culture, and a devoted Churchman as well; but when the pangs

became unbearably excessive, his habits of speech reverted to the days of the past, when he had been a soldier, and a muttered oath escaped him. It would be a mild sort of oath, as oaths go, — if any oaths ever can be called mild, — but whenever it broke from his lips he glanced at his daughter, who sat opposite him in a low chair, with a small leather box, in which she kept her most precious treasures, lying on her lap.

When she heard the infrequent ejaculations, her gray eyes would look reproachfully at him, until a feeling of shame pervaded his heart, which was just as inefficacious, by the way, as had been his former reflections in subduing the pain. He would shake his head mournfully, make a new resolution, and go back to his book.

Margaret was indulging in idle dreams. The subject of her thought was, of course, the sailor whom she deemed far away.

It was so long since she had seen him, and they had parted in anger. How handsome he looked in his uniform that day, at the end of the porch, as he stood bareheaded before her, the sunlight falling upon his sunny, curly hair. How he quivered upon his foot before he turned away! But what an imperious monster he had been the night before; how she hated to be domineered by anybody — much less a man — yet if Blake would only come back again; if she could only see him once more — was there not something about obey in the marriage service? Of course they were not married, — she blushed hotly at the very thought of her heart, — they were not married then, anyhow, and how mean

it had been of him to insist, before them all, in that regal way. How did he expect her to know the details of that waltz?

It was a hateful dance, she thought, at the same time beginning to hum the air, and unconsciously to tap the floor with her foot, in time; but she would teach it to Blake when — was there ever going to be a when, she wondered? She opened the box softly, she was such a foolish little thing, she thought, and looked within it for the hundredth time that day — as usual. There were a dozen or more brief letters in Fairford's big, bold hand. Nice, brotherly letters they were, too. Pshaw! she didn't want to be his sister at all!

There was a red rose, dried and faded, which he had refused to take from her hand; also there was a little sunny curl tied with a ribbon of navy blue. What a fool she was! Not like the proud and stately Evelyn Heathcote, whose going away that day had been such a heartbreak to her. Evelyn was so calm and contented — but, then, Evelyn knew she was loved; that made all the difference in the world. She was such a splendid girl, and so beautiful, how was it that Blakely had not fallen in love with her? There came a piteous tug at the poor little heartstrings. Perhaps he had!

She heaved a long sigh, and her eyes suffused with tears. At this moment a particularly vicious twinge caused the colonel to raise his eyes from his book. Something in the despondent attitude of the limp little figure before him attracted his attention.

"Da— confound this infernal foot," he broke out. "What's the matter with you, Margaret? You

look as if you had lost your last friend; and what is that little leather box which I see in your hand so much, any way? It seems to me — "

But the colonel never finished the sentence. He was interrupted; there was a strange sound outside upon the porch, — a sound as of some one crawling and dragging something. During a brief pause in the rain-storm they heard, quite plainly, a feeble voice crying, —

"Ahoy the house! Ahoy! Help! Help!"

"Some one in trouble, I suppose," said Margaret, as she sprang to her feet.

"Those confounded British again," exclaimed the colonel, wrathfully. "I suppose it will be our turn now since Sir James Heathcote has gone. They have ravaged every other plantation on the bay long since. Pull the bell yonder, daughter."

As the old negro house-servant made his appearance in answer to the summons, a feeble knock, which seemed to come from the floor in front of the hall door, was heard, followed by the sound of a sudden collapse against it.

"Go to the door, Cicero, there's some one out there," commanded the colonel.

The negro, who, with others of his class, lived in a constant state of apprehension on account of the danger they were in from British marauding parties, hesitated a moment; his face showed his fear, but the habit of obedience was still strong upon him, and he turned to comply with the directions he had received. Margaret, who had observed his terror, reassured him by following him out into the hall, saying, —

"Don't be alarmed, Uncle Cis. I will take care of you."

When the door was thrown open, Cicero, in spite of his powerful ally, jumped back in consternation, as a wet, bedraggled form, which had been propped against the door, fell prone at his feet.

"Good Gord, wha — wha — wha 's dat? It's a daid man," he added, after a pause, his teeth chattering with terror, as he started back.

"It 's only a man, anyway, Cicero, — what are you afraid of?" replied Margaret, calmly; "drag him into the hall and close the door. He is dead, or, possibly, he has only fainted."

Obeying his mistress' command, the man was soon laid upon the floor of the hall. The reassured Cicero knelt down by him, and laid his ear near his heart, which was feebly beating.

"He ain't daid yit, Miss Margit."

"What is it, Margaret?" called out the colonel's voice.

"It 's a man, father. He seems to have fainted."

"Bring him in here, Cicero. Call Tullius to help you."

"Yas, suh. You, Tullius, come heah."

The colonel was a classic scholar, and the great Roman orator was one of his favorites; therefore his valet was called Marcus, and his butler and footman rejoiced, severally, under the remaining portions of the name.

"Lay him down upon the rug before the fire. Here 's the key to the sideboard. Tell Marcus to bring me that bottle of old French cognac, quick! Now, Margaret, give him this," added the colonel,

as his commands were obeyed, pouring a draught from the bottle handed to him by the servant.

It was quite evident, from his dress, that the man lying on the floor was a seafaring man. He wore broad, long-flowing trousers, a loose blue shirt with wide collar open at the throat, a short jacket, and a belt with the cutlass and pistol still attached. His face was scratched and torn, as if from contact with bushes, his clothing soaked, and his hands and face covered with mud. As Margaret poured the fiery stimulant down his throat, he opened his eyes, and with the true instinct of a sailor, as he tasted the burning liquor, the like of which for quality had probably never before touched his lips, he gave vent to one expressive word, —

"More!"

"Give him another," said the colonel. When he had received it, with a sigh of blissful content he lifted himself, slowly, to a sitting position, and, supporting himself on his hands, blinked curiously about him. He then attempted to draw up his legs, preparatory to getting upon his feet. As he did so, his face whitened with pain, and he sank back upon the floor, while a muttered oath escaped his clenched teeth.

"What 's the matter with you," said the colonel, smiling, with evident sympathy, — "have you the gout also?"

"Gout, sir? No, sir, but a shot from them British, sir, carried away my left leg. It 's broke short off at the cat-harpins, an' I can't carry sail on it no more — but beggin' your pardin, sir, I 've got to go on. I 've got to find Colonel Barrett, a miling-

tary gent what lives in these parts. Can ye give me his bearin's, sir?"

As Margaret started, the colonel silenced her by a wave of the hand. He would inquire further of this seafaring person before he disclosed himself in these uncertain times.

"What do you want him for?"

"I 've got a message for him — but beggin' your pardon, sir, I must heave ahead. I 'm too late as it is now, but with this da — da — askin' your pardon again, sir — an' the young lady's — this consarned leg draggin' astern of me, I don't know how I 'm ever to find him."

"What is your name, my man?"

"George Spicer, sir, captain of the foretop on the frigate Narragansett, Cap'n Fairford — leastways, I will be, after we cut her out to-night," he added.

"Father," cried Margaret, in great excitement, "it is a messenger from Blakely. He intends to capture that ship anchored in the bay to-night. Don't you see?"

"Lord love ye, miss, so he is. However did you find it out?" said the astonished sailor.

"We thought he was in Maine, but he must have come down here, father. Is he well? Where is he now, Mr. Spicer?" continued the girl.

"Don't call me mister, lady. I ain't no mister. Just plain George Spicer; I am — "

"My man," said the colonel, impatiently, "if you have any message, out with it. I am Colonel Barrett."

"Lord, now, be ye?" said Master Spicer, in great surprise; "then I 've got something mor 'n a

message for ye," he added, pulling from the bosom of his frock a letter enclosed in an oilskin packet, which Tullius handed to the colonel. Tearing open the oilskin and the envelope, after first identifying Fairford's well-known seal on the outside, the Colonel handed it to his daughter.

"Read it, Margaret; it must be of importance."

As Margaret recognized the familiar handwriting, her heart gave a great bound. A wave of joy had overwhelmed her when the realization of her lover's nearness had been brought home to her, from which she was still trembling; but as she read on the color faded out of her cheeks, and when she had finished the brief note she laid it upon the table with a long sigh of terror.

"Read it aloud," said the colonel, impatiently; and, as she obeyed him, this is what the letter said: —

My dear Colonel, — I am engaged in a very desperate and secret undertaking to-night for our beloved country. You may depend upon George Spicer, the man who brings you this, as a trusty and faithful fellow. I ask you to give him a horse, and a good one, though you may never see it again, and a guide as well, for a purpose which he will explain to you.

For God's sake, as you love our cause, give him this assistance at whatever cost. Though this last is a small matter, I will add that my life and liberty as well, probably depend upon your action. My love and duty to Margaret. No more.

In haste, your affectionate kinsman,

Blakely Fitzhugh Fairford.

"Oho!" said the colonel, his face lightening as a soldier's might before a coming battle, "something 's up. Well, what is it, my man?"

"Why, sir, Cap'n Fairford is goin' to cut out the Narragansett where she rides at her anchors below here, to-night. He told me to tell you he was goin' to get away about six bells — eleven o'clock, if he succeeds."

"It 's half after that now," ejaculated the colonel, looking at the clock. "Go on."

"Then he 's goin' to head down the bay for them three — three — dash it all, beggin' your pardon, sir, I forgit the name."

"Three Moaning Sisters' Islands," suggested Margaret. "Go on."

"Thankee, miss, that 's it; them 's the place, an' he thinks he 'll reach there by three bells in the mid watch —"

"Half-past one o'clock," said the colonel; "go on, go on."

"He wants to run in through the passage between them islands an' the main shore, so 's the British ships which 'll be comin' after him will slip by him, while he lays snug under the lee of the land, an' then in the mornin' he 'll run on down the bay an' out to sea. It 's the only way he can escape bein' took agin."

"Splendid!" cried the colonel. "Capital! But what does he wish us to do?"

"He says he can't git in that there passage unless there 's a light on the little p'int opposite them female islands, an' I 'm to git a horse an' a lantern, an' ride down there and watch the bay, an' when I

see two lights, a white one an' a red one, with the red above, I 'm to light the lantern an' swing it three times athwart ships, an' three times alow an' aloft, an' then hold it steady till he comes in abaft the island, an' then I 'm to wait until he sends a boat off for me."

"I see," said the colonel, eagerly; "go on, Spicer."

"Yes, sir, that 's all. Now will you give me a light an' a horse? I should have been here an hour ago; but when I was passin' a little camp of them bloody landsharks aft there, one of 'em fired at me an' bowled me over, as I said. I had the good luck to roll down into a little shallow creek, an' I lay hid under some overhangin' trees until they hauled their wind an' give up the chase, sayin' they guessed they 'd made a mistake; an' then I crawled out of the creek on my hands an' knees, a draggin' the other leg behind me like a sea anchor; an' as I come rollin' over the fields before the wind, I raised the light from your windows an' beat up to the door, an' here I am, sir, an' awful dry my throat is now," said the seaman, exhausted by the pain from his broken leg and the blood he had lost, and by the long speech he had made.

"Give him another nip, Marcus. Well, sir, you can't ride a horse or do anything else with that leg of yours," said the colonel.

"For God's sake, sir," returned the unconscious hero, "I 've got to do it. The cap'n, he told me the safety of the ship depended on me. Leg or no leg, that there light has got to be lighted. It 's orders."

"Then I 'll have to send a man, myself, to do it. You have done nobly, already, my man, and what you need now is a bed and a doctor. Cicero, suppose you get ready and do this errand."

"Me, suh? Foh de lub of hebin, Mars Kunnel, doan sen' me, suh. I 's too ole, suh, an' too hebby; yais, suh. My, hit 's — hit 's fifteen miles, suh, up de road ter dat p'int, an' dere 's less 'en two 'ouahs foh ter do hit in, suh; please, suh, sen' one ob de young boys, suh."

"Yes," said the colonel, reflectively, "you are rather too fat for fast riding, I fear. Tullius, you, then."

"Oh, suh, Mars Bah'et, you would n't go foh ter sen' a po' ole niggah laik me, wid my roomastick back, out in de rain laik dis, suh? Oh, Mars, I got dat plumbago agin, now, suh," said the man, laying a hand upon his back, and groaning and writhing in well-simulated anguish.

"Shut up, you old fraud," said the colonel, — "you, Marcus? You 're young enough and light enough, too."

"Mars Kunnel," said the terrified valet, falling on his knees, "I rudder be whupped daid, suh, dan tek dat ride. Wid dem 'rauders a layin' foh ter captuh we-uns evywha, an' den de ghoses of dem wimmen on dat island — deed, suh, dey ain't none ob de boys on de plantation gwine go, deed dey ain't, suh — "

"You miserable cowards," said the colonel, "I knew it, of course."

He looked helplessly from the wounded sailor to the cowering, shivering, terrified negroes.

"You see, I 'll have to go, sir," said the sailor; "it 's reachin' on to eight bells now; for God's sake, bear a hand with the horse."

"Nonsense, you cannot; I 'll go myself," said the colonel, momentarily oblivious, leaping to his feet, whence he immediately sank back upon his chair, groaning in agony.

"A little sprung in the partners yourself, I see, your honor. Lord love you," said the sailor, "gimme the horse."

"Father, I will go," said Margaret, boldly; "there is no one else. I know the way, and I have fully two hours to do it."

"Ridiculous! Absurd!" said the colonel. "What! trust you alone, with the wood full of marauding parties, and all the loose characters of the district come to the surface, and at this hour, — are you crazy?"

"No," said Margaret, bravely, though she shuddered at the possible terrors indicated by her father; "but some one must go. None of the slaves will, or, if they would, they would be so frightened when they got there, they would be of no use. You cannot go, this sailor cannot go, we have no time to send for any one else — *I must go.* I will ride my beauty, Clifford — there 's nothing on this side of the bay can catch him — I know the road perfectly; I could follow it blindfold."

"I tell you, you shall not go."

"Father, I must. It 's for the sake of our country, — and for Blake's sake as well," she added, at the dictation of her heart, in which the order of reasons was reversed. "If he is to save his cap-

tured ship, he must have that light to guide him in. You know in what sore straits the country is now, and how rejoiced the land will be if they escape with the ship. If anything does happen to me, I will only be giving what hundreds of others have given, — my life for my country" — and my love, prompted her heart, but she did not speak the words aloud. "You are a soldier, and I am a soldier's daughter. Say that I may go. You must say it, father."

The colonel wavered, but there was evidently no alternative.

"It 's awful to think of it," he said, finally, "but I suppose you must." His reluctant assent being given, he became all business at once. "Tullius, go and have Clifford saddled and brought around to the front door, quick! Cicero, fetch me the silver-mounted flask from the sideboard. You, Marcus, get my pistols from the case in my chamber. Run quickly, daughter, and change your clothing. Put on a heavy suit, and take that military cape of mine, wear your heavy riding-boots as well; and, without fail, take my flint and steel also, else you might arrive at the end of your journey and not be able to strike a light. I will have one of the men prepare a lantern for you, which you can hang to your saddle bow in an oilskin bag. Hasten; you have but a little time left in which to make the distance, and, at best, must ride fast and hard. I can't bear to see her go," he added, as she ran from the room. Spicer groaned with disappointment.

"Curse this leg of mine," he growled; "it should have been better stayed."

In a short time the girl returned, attired in a rather short-skirted riding-habit, and booted and spurred for her journey. Her dainty form was enveloped in her father's long military coat; on her head she had a little cocked hat, tightly tied by a handkerchief under her chin; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes shining, her mouth resolutely closed. She had slipped the little packet of letters and the other contents of her box inside the bosom of her dress; the flask of brandy went into the pocket of her coat; she tucked the precious flint and steel inside of her dress, near the letters, so that by no possibility could they be lost. The lantern, carefully encased in the waterproof bag, stood on the table. Margaret came in and knelt at the side of her father's chair; the old man laid his hands upon her cheeks, and looked into her upturned face.

"May God guard you, daughter!" he said, solemnly. "May He help you to discharge your errand, and bring you safe back to me. Would that I had a son, to spare you this," he added, as she rose to her feet.

"I will do the best I can to take his place, father," answered Margaret, simply.

"I know that, my brave daughter; no woman could do more."

She stooped and kissed him, and turned away, resolutely choking down a sob.

"Missy," said Spicer, who had watched the scene respectfully, catching her gown as she passed, "when you see the men on the boat the cap'n promised to send for me after the ship got under the lee of the

shore, won't you tell 'em to tell him that I done my duty?"

"I will, surely," promised Margaret; and, not trusting herself to look at her father again, she hurried out of the room.

CHAPTER XXV

Into the Midnight

CLIFFORD, held by the negro groom, was standing at the foot of the steps, restlessly pawing the muddy roadway. He was a graceful, beautiful animal, with long, clean-cut slender limbs, thin withers and flanks, and an easy action, bespeaking speed. His deep barrel-like chest gave evidence of his ability to breathe when breath came hard, and his heart was breaking in some wild gallop. His back slightly curved, and with a springing arch over the loins covering the powerful muscles of his quarters, told the story of a rare strength and endurance.

His small, full-brained head, with its thin ears, full soft eyes, fine muzzle, dilating nostrils, and wide lower jaw, spoke of intelligence and feeling; and a slight concavity of the frontal bone added a hall mark of good breeding to his other excellencies. In color he was a glossy-coated chestnut sorrel, with a white blaze upon his forehead; in disposition he was spirited and strong, yet gentle as a woman and playful as a child; in lineage he was as high-bred as a noble, and, withal, responsively devoted to his young mistress, who loved him as the proverbial Arab loves his steed.

No one had ever ridden him but she, and he was her own exclusive property. The girl and the horse had been familiar companions in many delightful rides over the hills and far away, but they had never undertaken such a journey as that upon which they were about entering this night. The horse was prancing and curvetting, arching his neck, and pawing the ground in impatient protest at being called out at this untoward hour, and in irritation at the beating of the rain, which had commenced again, harder than before, upon his delicate skin.

"Clifford," said Margaret, stepping to his head, as he brought his wet muzzle down against her dainty cheek, "I hate to take you out. I am afraid as death to go myself, but it has to be done. We are riding for life and country and love, this time, and you must bear me safe," she whispered.

"All ready now, Miss Margit," said the groom, who had been fastening to the saddle the bag containing the lantern.

"Miss Margit," called out Marcus, from the door, "Mars Kunnel, he say luk ter dę saddle girt, yo'sef, missy, an' de bridle, an' de hoss, too, so 's ter mek shuah, an' he say ef you meet de enemy in de paf de bes' way is ter ride him down, an' he say Gord bress you again."

"Tell him I shall be all right," returned Margaret. The girl followed out the practical suggestions of her soldier father, looked carefully to the saddle girths, tested the stirrups as well, then fingered the buckles and straps of the bridle to see all secure, examined the lashings which held

the lantern to the saddle, and finally thrust the colonel's pistols into the holsters, in accordance with his directions.

"Everything is all right, Sam," she said to the groom; then, stepping on the horse-block, and lifting her foot into his massive hand, she swung her small self into the saddle, gathered up the reins in her firm little hands, and spoke a word to Clifford, who bounded forward into the night.

"D—n this gout," said the colonel, wiping his eyes; "it makes me cry like a baby."

"Yes, sir," said Master Spicer, sympathetically eying him, "I understand, sir."

Margaret was too good a horsewoman to exhaust the capabilities of her steed in the first period of her journey, so she restrained his ardent desire to go on, with a firm hand upon the controlling bridle, and rapidly cantered up the road which ran parallel to the shore of the bay for a short distance before it turned inward, and cut off, like a bow-string, the long, out-springing curve made by the jutting-out shore of the bay. It was plain and easy going within the familiar and sheltered limits of their own plantation; and when she reached the great gateway which opened upon the road, she drew rein a moment, and looked back toward the house.

The light from the window of the little room she had just left, the shutters of which had been thrown open, streamed out into the night; the old colonel had risen to his feet in spite of the pain, and, leaning upon the supporting shoulder of Marcus, with lifted hand shading his eyes, was looking vainly out into the darkness, in the direction in which he

knew she must have gone. A great sob rose in her throat at the sight of her old father, and her own tears mingled with the rain-drops which beat upon her cheek.

"This will never do; we lose time," she said at length. Then, nervously lifting the reins from the neck of the impatient horse, and turning away her head, she added, "Come, Clifford, we must get on. We have work to do."

She started slowly this time; but the canter of the horse grew more and more rapid, until, in a short time, he broke into a gallop. Throwing up his head, and shaking it, from time to time, impatiently, he gave such evidence as a dumb horse could, of his wish for a relaxation of the tight grasp of the restraining little hand upon the reins; until, presently, receiving the desired response to his mute appeal, he went flying through the night, in a long swinging gallop, which carried her over the ground at a great pace.

The road was a familiar one to Margaret, although she had never before seen it under such circumstances, and she gave the horse his way without hesitation. She was alone at midnight, in the dense wood on either hand — alone but for the companionship of her horse. It was pitch dark; the world was only a blur to her, except when the lightning flashed; she felt like an isolated point in a sea of blackness; but, aided by her vivid imagination, the familiar objects of daylight began to come to life and take strange shapes and mysterious forms in the shrouding darkness. The trees, showing only as black blurs, raced beside her as if instinct with

infernal life; the dark sky seemed to bend low over the road; and from either side there stretched out long waving arms, as if to clasp her in some ghost-like embrace. The inhuman silence, which was broken only by the muttered thunder and the splashing of the hoofs of the horse in the wet road, filled her with terror. The beating of her own heart, the sharp catch of her nervous breathing, overwhelmed her.

She trembled with fear and dread of the unseen and unfamiliar. Black shapes seemed to rise in front of her and stand menacing. Shutting her eyes when these things oppressed her, she rode recklessly into them. The swift disclosures of the lightning were scarcely less startling than the shapes of night. As she rode wildly forward the rain beat upon her in driving sheets; low branches stripped her hat from her head; others struck her in the face or about the body, though she bent low in the saddle to avoid them. Once something caught in her coat and jerked it from her shoulders, nearly tearing her from the saddle before the loop gave way, while she screamed aloud. By and by her long hair became unfastened, and streamed out behind her. She shivered with cold and terror, but still she drove ahead on the forest road.

The road was a straight one — she could not mistake it — but she lost all sense of location or distance. In all her terrors, however, she held herself steady, with the mechanical skill of the practised horsewoman, and did not relax her hold on the reins, nor lose control of the horse.

Once, when he slipped in a pool of water that lay

in the road, she lifted him up with all the strength of her young arms; once, when he shied, and stopped before something lying strangely ominous before him in the roadway, she patted him, and told him that he could not be as terrified as she was, urging him on, giving him courage out of and in spite of her own weakness, until the lightning flash disclosed a fallen tree which had blocked the way, and he leaped it, and resumed the journey.

The loneliness oppressed her frightfully, and finally took such a hold upon her that she leaned forward and patted the neck of the horse, and lavished caresses and endearing words upon him — he, at least, was living, and tangible, and real. Presently they came to the bank of a turbid stream; ordinarily the horse could have leaped it with a single bound; it was now become a raging torrent, swollen by the heavy rain; the horse hesitated in the darkness.

"Into it, into it, Clifford," she cried; "we cannot be any wetter than we are." So encouraged, he plunged in boldly, and reached the other shore in safety. Margaret gave him a moment's respite here, and he stood trembling and panting upon the bank; but the eagerness of her own desire had at last been communicated to her horse by the same subtle and mysterious process by which ideas are transmitted from man to man, and of his own volition he started forward, and broke into the long swinging gallop once more.

Faster now, and faster he ran. On and on they sped, buffeting away the darkness on either side, as a ship the water of the sea. In a wild chase after

love and safety, Clifford and Margaret flew through the midnight together. The thought of her lover, and the service she was to do him — the ship she was to save for her sorely pressed country which she loved with all the strength and enthusiastic devotion of her young heart — nerved her courage as the terrible moments wore away. Once the thought came to her that she might be too late, and, unconsciously, she struck the horse fiercely with the reins, until he bounded forward under the unexpected blow, nearly upsetting her by the swinging movement.

Fairford might be dead — killed in the attack — perhaps; for a moment she forgot her own terror in the thought.

After a long time she began to look carefully about her, checking her horse the while; they must be, they were, nearing the end of the journey now, yes — this was Briar Creek Hill. She recognized it — only a few miles farther now, she thought, as she again urged the horse up the hill, and so on and on. At the top of the hill she reined him in abruptly. The hill sank down to a valley on the other side. Through the valley there flowed a wide and deep creek, almost a river at this short distance from its mouth, which emptied into the bay.

The road crossed the creek on a stone bridge with a stone parapet, and the creek was not fordable. As she stopped at the top of the hill, she saw, in the lee of the parapet of the bridge, a fire burning, with some dark figures grouped around it; others were walking to an fro across the bridge, securely blocking her way. The thick underbrush and the

low-lying trees would prevent her from getting off the road; there was no cross road or short cut available — she had either to go forward or go back. What should she do? She stopped, and thought deeply.

CHAPTER XXVI

If an Enemy Opposes, Ride him Down

TO that question there was but one answer. Of the alternatives, she must needs go forward. There was not a moment of hesitation in arriving at that conclusion. Her only indecision had been as to how she was to pass the little outpost or foraging party whose members held the bridge. Singularly enough, in the presence of this real and palpable emergency, the nervousness and timidity, amounting to a frantic fear of the unknown and mysterious — the weird about her — which had made her ride a long dream of terror, left her at once, and she became as cool as the rain upon her face.

Her heart, which had been throbbing wildly, though it still continued to beat more quickly than usual, steadied and went more slowly, and if her hand and foot trembled now, it was only because of the cold and wet. It was not for nothing that she was the daughter of a line of soldiers; weak and feeble as she was, nervous as she had been, she yet possessed the courage of her ancestry. Beyond that formidable barrier lay the welfare of her lover, the safety of the ship, glory for her country; upon her actions, and upon Clifford's, these things depended.

As these thoughts flashed through her mind she resolved, in her soul, that no human barrier should with-

stand her. Her spirits rose; it was not humanity she feared, but the eerie creatures of her imagination. In a moment she formed her plan. Leaning forward again, she patted, caressingly, the neck of the horse which had carried her so gallantly during the night, thus giving outward expression to him, her only hope, of the affectionate gratitude which filled her heart.

"It all depends on you now, Clifford," she said aloud; "if you only do what I tell you, we shall get through safely; and oh, Clifford, if you love me, make no noise until the time comes!"

The pleased horse arched his neck under her gloved hand, and nodded his head as if he thoroughly understood. He had been much refreshed and rested by this brief breathing space at the top of the hill, and wanted to be off again the instant the signal was given, but the girl kept him well in hand with tight rein, and quietly cantered down the slope. As she drew near the bridge, she was able to make out the details of the party. Whether they were British foragers, or certain loose characters of the baser sort of her own land, who had taken advantage of the general disorder to do a little private warring for their personal benefit, she could not tell; in either instance, the case would be very bad for her if she were halted and captured; and no matter what happened, her journey would be a fruitless one if she were even temporarily detained, which was, after all, the paramount consideration.

She counted five or six figures huddled together in the lee of the parapet, near the fire, vainly seeking shelter from the rain. One man stood squarely

in the centre of the roadway, a rifle in his hand, evidently keeping watch. One or two others, also armed, lounged back and forth, or, indifferent to the storm, leaned upon the parapet on the other side. As she presently drew still nearer the party, she laid the reins upon Clifford's neck, and by a gentle pressure turned him out of the highway, and made him come down to a walk upon the grassy roadside, where his footfalls made no noise. She remembered the splendid advice of that bold old soldier and dashing cavalryman of the Revolution, her father: —

"If an enemy bar your way, ride him down."

The noise of the rain and the blackness of the night permitted her to approach the bridge near by without being seen or heard. A few steps farther, however, would bring her within the faint circle of the illumination of the fire. The time for action had come. Her heart was beating madly again, her body tingled with excitement. Had the sentry standing before her been able to see the proud, bold smile upon her lips, the look of tense resolution in her face, he would have hesitated ere he stood in her path. She forgot she was a woman as she quickly drew the colonel's pistol from the holster and cocked it. Then she quietly wheeled Clifford out into the roadway. Settling herself well in the saddle, getting a firm grip of the reins again, she bent her head low over the horse's neck.

"*Now!*" she called in a loud, shrill voice — for the life of her she could not restrain that exultant cry — which was heard far above the noise of the tempest. At the same instant she drove home into

Clifford's delicate flank the spur as she had never done before.

"*Clifford, on!*"

With the swiftness of an arrow but new released from a bow by a mighty-armed archer, the astonished and affrighted horse gave a great bound, and sprang toward the bridge — that spur to him had been like a blow in the face from a lover's hand.

"What's that?" sharply cried the man on watch in the middle of the road. "Hello! Who comes —"

He never finished the sentence. A great black shape sprang upon him out of the darkness, like an apparition; two great fiery eyes looked into his own; he caught a fleeting glimpse of blood-red nostrils wide distended. Above the horse's head a white face shone in the firelight, teeth set, eyes shining, and then something huge and tremendous struck him in the breast like an avalanche. As he fell back upon the bridge with a shriek of terror, under the mighty impact, an iron hoof struck him in the head with terrific force and beat out his brains.

At the wild cry of the sentinel, the others had leaped to their feet, and the two already standing sprang back upon the road in futile attempt to bar the way and check her progress. As well attempt to stop the thunderbolt. They saw the flash of a pistol, heard its quick, sharp crack. One of them fell back against the parapet groaning and cursing, a bullet in his shoulder. The great bulk of the horse struck the other upon the shoulder, as he caught at the bridle, and brushed him aside like a leaf in the storm. There was a thunder of hoofs upon the bridge, a spark struck off by the iron shoes

of the horse, and a moment after a rifle shot rang out in the night. At the same moment Clifford leaped into the air like a bird, bounded forward, and they disappeared in the darkness.

They were over; they had broken away. In her mad excitement Margaret struck him, and spurred him again and again. Pursuit would have been futile, in any event; and since there were no horses with the party on the bridge it was not even attempted. She never thought of it, however, as she swept through the air like a swallow. By and by her senses returned to her in a measure; but now she found she had entirely lost control of her horse. She might as well have tugged at an iron bar as to attempt to restrain him with the reins. For the first time in his life he failed to respond to her voice. He ran forward, forward, madly; flakes of foam from his mouth, tossed up by his head and blown back by his wild racing, clung to her habit as they tore through the night.

A wild exultation took possession of her; the blood burned in her face, the mad joy of the hunter filled her veins. He would have his way; well, she would let him go. She even found herself urging the horse onward, recklessly; forward, ever forward, on and on they flew. Her heart sang the song of triumph, her soul knew no fear; in wonder she found herself crying aloud, incoherently. But such a pace could not last; besides, they must be nearing the end of their journey now.

She remembered that there was a great rock by the side of the road, and beyond that opened a footpath which led through the wood and underbrush

a half mile or more to the water's edge, where she was to display the light. Suddenly a great black monolith loomed up beside her. She tried to turn in, but in vain; they passed it in a flash. She must stop now, if for no other reason than that she was killing the horse. She tried to check him with the reins and with her voice, but, as before, in vain. He had been running at full speed, but now she noticed that his speed was gradually diminishing, though he still held straight on, and, absolutely uncontrolled, would not be swerved from his course.

She could hear his deep panting breath coming from him like a human sob. She tried to check him again and again, to bring him to a stop; but, as if moved by some blind instinct of ambition, or, as if the accumulative intensity of the two hours' wild advance had impressed itself upon his personality, he continued straight ahead, and straight ahead he would go till he died. Wonder at the actions of the horse, for the moment, supplanted other emotions in her.

His pace was slower now — slower — slower — almost a walk. She had ceased her pull at the reins, and laid her hand tenderly upon his drooping neck. He staggered now, staggered again, and fell forward. What was the matter? Ah, she knew. Realizing the inevitable, she quickly disengaged her foot from the stirrup, and, as he slowly sank, panting and gasping, to the ground, she stood beside him.

She was a woman again. A great sob rose in her throat. The random rifle shot at the bridge had struck the horse. He had bled to death; the wild

ride had used his vitality up the sooner, and her hand had urged him on. They would ride no more together. He had done his splendid part to bring her to the haven where she would be. He had done his duty, and had borne himself nobly and well, though he was only a horse, dying, in the effort, with all the gallantry and resolution of the most distinguished of his kind.

With nervous trembling fingers she detached the lantern from the saddle bow, and then knelt down, and for a moment laid her cheek against that of the dying horse. She left a kiss upon his wet face, — a kiss for the like of which many men would have died; but she had no time to mourn further, then.

"Goodbye, Clifford," she sobbed. Then, rising to her feet, she picked up her skirts and ran back along the road.

CHAPTER XXVII

A Light in the Darkness

UNDER the lee of the great stone she found the pathway, and plunged boldly into the forest. Strange sounds met her ear again. The weird shapes which had so alarmed her at the beginning of her journey were nearer to her now. Each blur of darkness seemed pregnant with a danger seeking instant deliverance. The underbrush impeded her way, brambles caught her garments, checking her progress. Her long wet skirts clung to her and retarded her steps, but she drew them up and pressed on. Once a shadowy arm reached out and laid a hand upon her head; she felt a sudden pull upon her flying hair, and would have shrieked and fainted but for her unfulfilled errand; so she reached back a trembling hand and disengaged her tresses from the tree bough and pressed on again.

Now she could hear the splash of the waves upon the shore. The wind had been roaring through the tree-tops above her, and as she came out upon the open rock in front of the islands she was almost swept from her feet by the force of the gale. Here was the spot. Long familiarity easily enabled her to reach the point of vantage from which she was to swing the light. Was she too late? Her eyes

eagerly swept the bay for the signal. There was not a light to be seen. He had not come, or else he had gone by. She would wait. She would wait until the morning if necessary, so she sank down upon the rocky point, keeping her eyes upon the bay.

She first made sure that the lantern was safe under the oilskin; then her hand went to the bosom of her dress. Yes, there was the flint and steel; there, too, was the little leather packet. She did not dare to make a light to see where she was, or what time it was. She did not know but that the wood might be filled with enemies, real and unreal, to whom the spark struck by the steel would betray her. Her salvation was to sit still, and this was the hardest of her trials.

Shivering with cold, a chill as of death upon her, she was desperately weary. She missed the companionship — I had almost said the sympathy — of her noble horse; she lacked the freedom given by his rapid motion, the feeling of power and mastery which she had when she rode him. In the face of the intangible and unreal her terrors came back again with increasing force.

Hark! What was that sound she heard above the breaking of the waves, the roar of the wind, the beat of the rain, the crash of a thunder-clap? — a low moaning sound, oft repeated, — a deep mournful note like the wail of a lost spirit crushed with despair, — the cry of abandoned hope. The weird sound came from the Three Moaning Sisters, on the other side of the narrow pass. She knew the tradition of the three maidens who had gone out for

a row one evening, early in the century which had passed, and whose boat had been driven by a sudden squall of the wind upon the three jagged rocks on the point of the island beyond which her lover sought safety, and where the poor girls had been drowned. It was told in every negro hut, and whispered in every cabin, that the spirits of the three unfortunate women had hung about these perilous reefs since that day, and there was death before those who heard their warning voices.

She had often laughed at the absurd superstition — mocked at the foolish legend as an old wife's tale. Were those voices of the dead calling to her? Whose death did they betoken? Not Fairford's — pitying Saviour — not his. Again and again she heard the weird cry. She could have shrieked aloud in terror. What was the hour? Was it to-day or yesterday that she had set forth upon her mad ride? For what had she come here — to this lonely, desolate, blasted spot?

Ah! Up the bay, there, a light, shining like a single star in the blackness of the night, — a white light, and above it, at a moment later, there gleamed balefully another light of red! It was the signal. Her heart bounded once more, her fears vanished again. Thank God, she was in time. Nervously she tore open the bosom of her dress. Seizing the flint and steel, and turning her back to the wind and rain, after repeated failures, she finally succeeded in igniting the wick of the lantern. The lights were nearer now — much nearer; they were making toward her with the swiftness of the storm itself. Throwing aside the oilskin cover, she rose to her

feet with the light in her hand. What were the directions which had been given to the sailor?

Out in the bay, Fairford and Ludlow were standing together on the deck of the frigate. Old Rhodes was stationed near the wheel, which was in charge of two skilful and trusty seamen. The others of the crew were disposed at points of need, all eagerly watching. The flying moments were filled with deep anxiety.

"I hope to God Spicer met with no mishap," said the captain. "I would not dare to take the ship in past the rocks on Three Sisters Island without that light, and unless we get in there, with those two vessels behind us, and the British ships before, we 'll be hemmed in, surrounded, and have absolutely no chance of escape. If we do get in there, however, and lie to for a few hours, until the morning, they will probably pass on, and not seeing us at the mouth of the bay in the morning may imagine that we have gone to sea. At any rate, we 'll have all our foes before us in that event, and that will give us a fighting chance."

"Have we nearly reached the point, think you?" asked Ludlow, "whence we should bear up for the Island pass?"

"Almost, I think," said Fairford, anxiously; "as near as this black night will enable me to judge. It 's about sixteen knots from where we cut her out to the pass, and as the road cuts off the big bend of the bay, it is only fifteen miles from Colonel Barrett's to the point. Margaret and I have often ridden it together."

"I took the ride once with Miss Heathcote myself," said Ludlow, sighing.

"Yes," said Fairford; "how embarrassing it is that she and Sir James are aboard. Ships of war are no place for women. What to do with them I know not. I cannot spare the time nor men to set them ashore. They'll even have to go with us, I suppose."

"I suppose so," replied Ludlow, his heart bounding at the thought of the privileges the companionship would give him with Evelyn, whom he still loved.

"Better show the lights now, I think. Forward, there! Hang up those lights on the foreshrouds — the red one above the white one," said the captain. "You stay aft, Ludlow. I'll take my station on the forecastle to con her in. Do you see anything of the other ships?"

"No, sir," replied the latter, sweeping the sea behind him.

"That's well. Stand by for orders, and see they are obeyed promptly, for all our sakes."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the young officer, saluting.

When Fairford reached the forecastle, the lights had been displayed. Eagerly he searched the black blur of the shore toward which he was sailing as nearly as he dared go. In order to get a better view, he sprang into the foreshrouds, and stood upon the sheer-poles, and, taking hold of the forward swifter, he leaned far out into the night. There was no evidence, whatever, that his signal had been seen; no response to it was made. He was in a perfect agony of suspense. The ship was sweeping through the

water at a tremendous rate; it would soon be too late; once past the point, he would have to go on, he could never beat back to the pass.

"I should have sent two messengers — three — " he muttered, "to provide for accident. It was too great a task for one man. I dare not take the ship in without that light." Ah! What was that ahead there, that glow in the darkness? Fairford's heart stood still, as the light ahead of him moved three times from side to side, then thrice up and down. The signal! the signal! — They were safe! He fixed his eye upon it as it stood steady now — the faint beacon which meant salvation.

"Starboard the helm! Man the weather braces!" His voice rang through the ship like a cry of triumph, telling, in its vibrations, the story of success.

"I 'll make a boatswain's mate of that man," he said to himself, as, in obedience to his orders, the ship swung in toward the shore, and with the wind on her quarter rushed for the wished-for pass.

Out on the jutting point a woman stood, holding in her trembling hands the light which lighted her lover's path, — the light which showed her country's way. The red and white lights before her were suddenly extinguished; but that gave her no uneasiness. She knew why; she divined the reason, — that it was to prevent the other ships from observing the motions of the chase. Exultation was in her heart again. She had lighted the beacon, so she waited in a fever of excitement. By and by, a great black cloud drew into the pass out of the bay. She

heard the groaning of the spars and the straining sails. Aided by a lightning flash, she even detected the white waves in the darkness boiling and foaming about the bows. The ship was safe.

As the vessel glided by the point, the moaning of the weird sisters of the storm broke upon her ears. She heard the splash of the falling anchor in the still water beneath the point, the flap of the heavy canvas, the creaking of the blocks, sharp words of command, the rush of the cable through the hawse pipes. Her work was over, her task had been performed; like Spicer, she had done her duty. The lamp fell from her nervous hand to her feet, reaction came, and she sank down beside it, feeble, exhausted, fevered, delirious — what happened to her now mattered not; her lover was saved.

The rain beat upon her. In her ear she heard the wild cry of the sisters of the wind. Was it her death those cries had betokened? She drowsed wearily, and thence knew no more.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A Theological Discussion

OUT on the ship hard work was going on, and the eager men worked with speed. The boats had been called away, and the English prisoners were being set upon the shore of the three islands. Inasmuch as they outnumbered his own crew, Fairford felt that there was no security for the captured ship until he had got rid of them. He explained to the senior English officer left, who had demurred greatly, that the islands were in full sight of the English ships, which were constantly passing up and down the bay, and their rescue from them would be a matter of scarcely a day.

At any rate, rescue or no rescue, he was compelled to dispose of them, and boats were immediately called away, and the work of landing them at once began; they were disarmed, brought on decks in small groups, and securely guarded until they were put on shore. After discharging the first load of prisoners upon the island, the first boat, instead of immediately returning to the ship as the others did, for another cargo of captured humanity, made its way to the point on the mainland where the light had been shown, to pick up Spicer, as Fairford had promised.

"He should be cruisin' around hereabouts," said old Joe, who was in command, as he beached the boat on the shingle, — "if he 's got any sense o' bein' where he ought to be — Spicer!" he called loudly, "ahoy, mate! Dash it all," he said, as no response was made to the hail which he several times repeated; "I suppose I 've got to work up to that there p'int and carry him down, he seems to have got so bashful like. Come along, Thompson. The rest of you stay here. Gimme that lantern. Have you got your cutlass, Bill?" he continued, leaping on shore.

"Ay," responded the seaman, laconically, rising from the thwart, where he had pulled stroke oar, and following the older man. The two made their way to the rocky headland whence the light had been seen.

"Spicer — George — where are ye, man? Why don't you answer; are you deaf?" he called anxiously. "D' ye see him, mate?"

"Blast this rain; can't hear nor see nothin'," replied Thompson, while the two old men went wavering blindly about over the little uneven plateau. Suddenly Rhodes' foot struck something.

"Hello!" he said, "I 've struck a reef. Is this you, Spicer? If it is, you blank fool, why don't you pipe up? Show a light, Bill. Sink me!" he exclaimed in astonishment when the lantern was brought forward, "if it ain't a female!"

"Female wot?" asked the matter-of-fact Thompson.

"Female woman — who d' ye think it was, an elephant?"

"Is she dead?" said the man, ignoring the last bit of sea sarcasm.

"No, she aint," replied the old seaman, kneeling down, and tenderly laying a hand upon her.

"Here 's a doused light — she must a' showed it herself — God! Wot a night for a woman to be adrift in — wonder who 't is?" said Bill.

"Well, it 's not Spicer, that 's one thing certain," answered Rhodes, confidently.

"Wot 'll you do with her?" said Thompson.

"I, guess we 'd better take her aboard," said the boatswain's mate, dubiously; "we can't leave her out here to die, though wot the cap'n 'll say to me for bringin' another female critter on the ship I can't say."

"I don't like it myself. Wimmen are reg'lar — wot 's that Bible feller's name wot got swallered by a whale? Jones, ain't it? Yes, reg'lar Jonses on a man-o'-war," said Thompson, gloomily. "I never did swaller that yarn nohow; aint never seen no right whale with a throat big enough to take in a Jones, an' I 've struck a harpoon into some whales in my day, too," he continued, sceptically.

"Wich his name ain't Jones, but Jonah; an' I want to tell you, Bill Thompson, that as for me, I believe every word in the Bible, an' you better do it, too, if you want a safe anchorage in Davy Jones' locker by an' by; wich I say, meanin' no disrespect to God, far from it. Besides, sperm whales kin swaller anything. . Now if that there Bible whale had as big a mouth for men as you 've got for grog, he 'd 'a' took in a whole family of Joneses — you better dewelop a taste for swallerin' yarns instid o'

whisky, as the chaplain used to say, fer ye'r soul's health, if ye 've got any soul, blast ye," responded old Rhodes, severely, checking any further theological discussion by resting his case, as many better men have done, on his individual authority as a boatswáin's mate as distinguished from that of a mere able seaman. "An' I don't want to stand here gabblin' with you all night, nuther. It 's plain to ye that this yere woman is not the man we want. Howsomever, he told us to get Spicer; an' as he 's not here, we 'll do the next best thing."

"Wonder where Spicer is, anyhow?" said the abashed William, trying to ingratiate himself with the superior Rhodes again. "The 'old man' told him he was goin' to make him a bosun's mate, if he done the job seamanlike. Wonder if he 'll make this yere female one," continued Thompson, laughing hoarsely.

"Don't you be fool twicest in the same night, Thompson; your head 's gittin' that soft, mate, I 'll make a rope fender out of it when we git back. You ketch her aft and I 'll take her forward here. Easy now — easy."

The two men lifted up their precious burden, one at the shoulders and one at the feet, and tenderly carried it down the hill, and deposited it carefully in the boat, amid the wondering comments of the crew.

"Is that Spicer, mate?" inquired one.

"Wot have ye got there, Joe?" asked another.

"Lord, if it ain't a woman!" said a third.

"Belay your jaw tackle, all hands of ye," said the old man, sternly. "Bill, you take the hellum,

an' make for the ship; I 've got to hold the female. Shove off, out oars, give way."

"Lord, I wisht I was Joe, with that female woman," said the stroke oar, meditatively surveying that veteran seaman, holding the slender girl as gingerly as if she had been a baby.

"Shut up, blast ye," responded that individual, irately; "I 'll break the head of the first man that says another word. This yere 's no woman, she 's a lady, you swabs, an' she saved the ship which she would n't 'a' done, if she 'd 'a' knowed you as long as I 've done, you worthless haymakers."

"What have you got there?" asked Fairford, as Rhodes, assisted by the others, dragged his precious burden up through the gangway. "It is n't Spicer, is it? By heavens — another woman! It 's too much; d' ye want to turn the ship into a nunnery?"

"Well, your honor," said Rhodes, dubiously, "Spicer, he were n't on the p'int, an' there want nobody there but this yere female pussen, an' I guessed I 'd better bring it off. Seemed a pity to let it be dyin' there, and then — well" — he went on, boldly, "she lighted the lantern for us — an' there were n't nobody else there, an' I could n't leave her alone."

"Show the light here," said Fairford, quickly, as the truth began to dawn upon him. "Good heavens! It 's Margaret," he exclaimed in terror, as the light fell upon her drawn white face, with its closed eyes and open lips, as she lay back in the boatswain's arms, her matted hair falling back over his shoulder. "Is she dead? Give her to me," he cried, fiercely, every fibre in his body throbbing responsive to her

presence as he picked her up in his arms as if she had been a child, and bore her quickly to the cabin. Evelyn was standing there, packing up, preparatory to going ashore with the rest, Sir James preferring that contingency to a further cruise under the American flag. Fairford carried his dripping burden into the room, and laid it down upon one of the lockers.

"Why, it is Margaret!" exclaimed Evelyn, in terrified surprise, rushing up to her. "Captain Fairford, how came she here?"

"She must have lighted the beacon that got us into this haven," said Fairford, solemnly. "Think of it; that awful ride, this awful night — where can Spicer be?"

"Shall we take her back to the shore with us?" queried Sir James, anxiously.

"I fear not," answered the young captain, in great anxiety; "I do not think she could possibly venture; a further exposure in this wild weather would kill her."

"Certainly she cannot be taken away in this state," said Evelyn; "she must be attended to here, and at once. See how wretched she looks! You need not pack up any more for me, Sir James, I shall stay with her; I cannot leave her alone; I love her, the poor darling."

"Of course if you stay, I must stay, too," said Sir James, ruefully; but, giving up to her, as usual, "Don't you think that after awhile — "

"No," answered Evelyn, promptly, "we must stay."

"May heaven reward you for this, Miss Evelyn. For God's sake take care of her. I — " Fairford

stopped abruptly, and, in anguish of soul, looked down upon the white face of the girl he loved. His whole adventure was nothing, his triumph was turned to bitterness unless she recovered.

"I understand all about it," said Evelyn, impatiently; "now leave us alone. Hand me my medicine chest, Sir James, if you please."

After Fairford had reluctantly left the cabin, Evelyn knelt down beside her friend, and forced a restorative between her closed lips; in a little while she stirred uneasily, and muttered something, opening her eyes widely.

"The light — the light — I did it — won't you take the rose now, Blake?" said the feeble voice.

Up on the deck Fairford communicated the news of Margaret's wonderful heroism to Ludlow, in the pauses permitted by their arduous duties, even as Rhodes had told the story to the crew. The two officers marvelled over it. That one feeble woman had made the terrible journey alone seemed almost incredible. Fairford readily surmised that something had happened to Spicer, and that Margaret had taken his place, though he wondered why the colonel had not done it himself.

To his love, therefore, — the love which he had endeavored to repress so sternly, and which had only grown greater under his insistence, — was added a boundless gratitude. Whatever of reward came to him, personally, whatever service he would be able to render his country, would be due to her. He had thought that three men had not been enough for the task which had been accomplished by one woman.

How small, and weak, and helpless she had looked as she lay in his arms, her glorious hair unbound, matted and tangled, her dress soaking with water, rent and torn, the bosom torn open, the glove gone from one little hand. His heart yearned toward her as a mother's heart turns to her weaned child. There was protection as well as adoration in his soul.

O God! he prayed, if she could only be spared; if she should take no harm from this wild ride.

At every possible moment he inquired for her, until Evelyn forbade him the cabin; and so, in piteous anxiety and dreadful foreboding, the long night wore away for him.

And yet there was a joy in the very presence, upon his own ship, of the maiden he loved. He could sympathize with his friend, and understand the glad light in his face, and the joyful thrill in his voice, when he spoke of Evelyn remaining with them. The two men were like boys in their buoyant happiness, and in longing for the morrow thought nothing of the dangers and difficulties entailed upon them by the presence of women on a ship whose sole mission was to fight, whose only end and aim was bloodshed and destruction.

CHAPTER XXIX

New Duties for William Cotton

IT was near daybreak before they succeeded in getting the last of the prisoners upon the shore. The rain had ceased for some time, and the wind had gradually abated, though it was still a fine steady breeze. As soon as the day broke, and enough light was afforded the men on the ship to see properly, the body of the unfortunate Badely, which had hitherto been unnoticed, owing to the darkness and hurry, was discovered by the horrified crew. It was at once lowered to the deck, and then sewed up in a weighted hammock, and dropped into the sea, Fairford himself, in default of a chaplain, reading the service.

The man had never been popular with those members of the crew of the Narragansett, who had known him as a deserter upon the Constitution; they never forgot that he was an Englishman, who had fought against his flag, though, on account of the circumstances attending his case, they had partially condoned his fault. Nevertheless, a certain pity for his untimely and disgraceful end filled the hearts of the men. Some of them remembered the burden of his complaint, that he had been kidnapped by a press gang on his wedding day, "An' Polly lyin' swoondin' on the beach." She had waited and

watched for him a long time, and now he could never go back to her.

Below, in the sick bay, young Martin was found. He had always been popular among all who knew him, on account of his cheerful, pleasant ways. As the rugged seamen looked at him as he lay on his face in a hammock — though his back was not an unusual sight — tears of pity and bitterness welled up in many an eye, and anger and determination filled every heart. Beside the hammock in which the hapless man lay moaning they made new resolutions or sternly renewed old vows, in a way which boded ill for those sailing under the English flag who crossed their pathway. When, later on, they learned of old Martin's fate, the name of that martyr became a watchword, and the favorite war-cry of the men was "Remember Martin!"

As soon as the sun was fairly risen, Fairford directed that the anchor be weighed, and the ship was soon sailing through the channel between the island and the shore, passing the sullen Englishmen clustered upon the rocks, regarding them, and finally, through the wide mouth at the other end of the channel, coming out into the broad expanse of the great bay. Eagerly the two officers swept the horizon. There was not a sail in sight. So far their venture had been a wonderful success.

The wind was now scarcely more than a whole sail breeze, and the ship was soon covered with clouds of new and snowy canvas by the eager men. Everything from the main royal down was rap full, and doing its work. The speed of the vessel was marvellous; and when she felt the full effect of the

breeze, she heeled over and took a bone in her teeth, fairly flying through the water.

"Whip along, you old bucket. Heave ahead, ye water witch, that 's a pace for ye," said old Rhodes, leaning over the lee cathead, and looking down at the boiling smother of foam tossed aside by the sharp cutwater, and thrown up by the spring of the bow. "It 'll have to be a good one that you can't overhaul at this pace."

"What 's she makin', d' ye think, Joe?" asked one of the forecastle men, — "eleven?"

"Twelve, mate, twelve knots an' more, if she 's makin' one," said the old seaman, looking critically at the whirling green water rushing alongside.

"She 's a flyer, an' no mistake," said one.

"Ay," said another, "she 'll have to be a good one that will ketch us."

"'T ain't that way I 'd put it," answered Rhodes; "it 'll have to be a good one that we can't ketch. We 're out here to run after, not from, things, in this old hooker."

"Do you think we 'll get any prize money this cruise, Mister Rhodes?" piped little William Cotton, late of the Constitution, who, with his usual precociousness, had intruded himself into the centre of a group of veterans, a thing no other boy on the ship dared to do.

"Prize money, you young swab, you," Rhodes said, grimly, lifting him by the back of his jacket. "If you ain't the most mer — mer — what is the word, shipmates?"

"Mercenarious, ain't it?" said the literary light of the forecastle.

"Ay, that 's it. Thankee, mate. If you ain't the most mercenarious little cuss I ever did see. Can't you fight for nothin' but money? Wot did ye do with your last prize money you got on the Constitution? — spent it all in foolishness, I 'll bet."

"I guv it to my mother, sir. Did you give yours any you got?" said the boy, boldly.

"Lord, now did ye," said old Rhodes, laying his big hand protectingly on the boy's head; "that was nice on you. I ain't had no mother since I was born. Folks as knows me told me I had one then, an' I guess 't was true — but it was a long time ago, an' I 'm not rightly sure of it, though. Not many sailor men thinks much about their mothers, anyway, I 'm afeard."

"Billy, ye 're wanted aft," said one of the seamen, springing up on the forecastle; "cap'n wants to see ye."

"Come this way, youngster," said Fairford, smiling kindly as the boy stopped before him and nervously saluted. "How old are you?"

"Fourteen, sir."

"Do you think you could wait on the two ladies in the cabin while they are on the ship?"

"I guess so, sir," said the boy; "I never did none of it, but I 'm willin' to try if they 're willin' to have me, an' if it don't prevent me from fightin', an' if I git my prize money reg'lar just the same, sir."

"Come along, then. You may fight and get your prize money too," said the captain, laughing; and, descending the ladder, followed by the boy, he knocked softly at the door of the cabin, his own cabin now, by the way.

Sir James opened it cautiously.

"How is she?" said Fairford, in deep agitation, it being perhaps two hours since he had dared to ask, after Evelyn's last order.

"Sh—" said Evelyn, just behind Sir James, and laying her finger upon her lips, "I told you not to come here and disturb us; a nice example of obedience you set your officers; don't speak so loud, she might hear you. She is asleep now. The fever has gone down. When she wakes, I think she will be all right again, save for her weariness. I don't believe she will even have a cold."

"Evelyn, who is most proficient in nursing, has taken excellent care of her," said Sir James.

"Did she — did she — know you before she went to sleep?" asked Fairford.

"Not at first, but afterward, yes," answered Evelyn.

"What did she say? Did she mention me?" he questioned, blushing furiously.

"To tell you that would be betraying confidence, I think," replied the English girl, gravely; "she may tell you herself, later," she added, smiling. In which assurance he got what consolation he could.

"Well, this," said Fairford, after a moment's hesitation, hauling the boy into view, "is Master William Cotton, commonly called Billy. I have detailed him to wait upon you so long as you are our guests."

"All right," said Evelyn, looking kindly at the agitated boy, "I am sure he will do very nicely." Whereupon he became her devoted slave forever.

"I hope, Fairford, that you can see some way of

putting us ashore or transshipping us. I confess I have no wish to make a cruise under the American flag, meaning no disrespect to it, of course."

"I understand you, Sir James. I will certainly do what I can, though what that will be I hardly foresee; but don't worry, you may get on an English ship before we leave the bay," he added gravely; "we are by no means escaped yet."

"Not that way, I hope," said Evelyn, impulsively, observing his deep anxiety, and losing sight of her country in her friendship.

Fairford thanked her with a grateful glance, and turned away, saying: —

"I must go on deck again, and relieve Ludlow. The weather bids fair to be lovely, and you and Miss Heathcote must come out on deck, Sir James, after breakfast, which Billy will bring you; we'll do our best for you in that line, but just at first that won't be much. Do you suppose that Margaret would come too, later on, if she is able?"

"She will be," said Evelyn, promptly, "and then we can all enjoy this glorious morning while we have the chance."

CHAPTER XXX

Safe at Sea

TOWARD evening the ship neared the mouth of the bay. She had been hugging the east shore closely, and when she finally shot fairly out into the bay to weather Cape Charles, Fairford and Ludlow swept the open with their glasses. Over in Lynn Haven Bay, far to the south of them, a number of ships were lying at anchor in a little cluster; one of them — evidently the man-of-war brig which had pursued them — was hove to. A small frigate was getting under way. Far out to sea the sails of two ships were barely visible, the ships being hull down beneath the horizon.

On the side of the bay nearest to which they were, and where Fairford proposed to pass, was a small schooner, a patrol boat, evidently, flying the English flag. The carelessness which had pervaded the anchor watches had extended to the fleet. The English commanders had no suspicion but that the Narragansett had already got to sea. The two cruisers in the offing had been despatched in pursuit, and therefore but two of the ships in the bay were ready for action, and they only by chance.

The hour which was to determine the final success of their bold adventure had now arrived.

All of the little party were on deck. Margaret, pale and languid after her night's experience, though already beginning to recover from it, with the recuperative elasticity of youth, was sitting in a chair which had been provided by the already devoted William. Evelyn and Sir James walked the deck at her side. The low afternoon sun shone across the broad expanse of water, crowning, with a crest of sparkling silver, each whitecapped wave, as far as eye could see. The new vessel was like an exquisite picture, and the off-shore breeze sang merrily through the rigging as the ship bowed and curtsied beneath its mighty caress; but the hearts of the two women were filled with sadness.

Whenever Evelyn closed her eyes, she could see the disordered cabin, the dead body of the English lieutenant, with whom she had laughed and jested, lying at her feet. The frightful experiences of the morning had shocked her greatly, for a thin bulkhead was all that had separated her, a pitying woman, from the horrors of Martin's punishment and Cunningham's death. She had been as close to these agonies as comedy is to tragedy, as purity to shame, in life. It was only by force that Sir James had kept her from rushing out and interfering. All these things had unnerved her, and robbed her rounded cheek of some of its usual bloom. Alas! she thought, that people who read the same Bible, sing the same songs, laugh at the same jests, and in their hours of agony call upon the same God, should have recourse to barbarous, brutal war to settle differences which should have never arisen. Although in commission but a few days, upon the

decks of the frigate had already been poured libations of blood.

Margaret's griefs were so tempered with joy that at times she forgot them. Her chief cause of anxiety lay in her vivid appreciation of the suspense under which her father would be until she could get word of her safety to him. When that might be no one could tell. Tears sprang to her eyes from time to time, as she thought of her old playfellow, the gallant Clifford; but in the safety of the ship, in the presence of her lover, she found compensation for these.

She eagerly watched him walking to and fro, consulting with Ludlow, or giving directions about the movements of the ship — so proud, so strong, so masterful; the very sight of him was as a tonic to her. She luxuriated in the thought that she had saved him — he was hers now. She speedily rallied from the consequences of her last night's experiences, and the color began to steal back to her cheek again. Evelyn's wardrobe, which had been cheerfully offered, had been levied upon to enable Margaret to discard her bedraggled apparel, and the deft fingers of the two girls had easily adapted the articles selected to the use required.

Fairford and Ludlow were earnestly talking together as the ship came out in the open.

"I shall hug the shore to port here as closely as I dare, on account of the shoal water," said Fairford. "We can't pay much attention to the schooner on the port bow."

"Certainly not," replied Ludlow; "none of the ships over there will be able to get under way quick

enough to overhaul us, except that small frigate up toward the river. If she gets within range, she may cripple us and enable the other ships to close."

"Ay," agreed Fairford, "and the brig we may also leave out of our calculations; she 's slow, probably, like most of those war brigs, and would not dare come near us unless we are crippled."

"What about those two out there?" asked Ludlow, pointing to the offing.

"Let us once get clear of this end of the tangle, and I think we can manage that one all right. Besides, they are so far away it would be nightfall before they could possibly get in range. I suspect one of them is our pursuer of last night; but she 'll have to go faster than she did then to catch this bark. Get the men at the braces, Mr. Ludlow," continued the captain, resuming his quarter-deck manner; "station some of the oldest and trustiest at the wheel. Better assign some of the best to the guns temporarily as well. It 's a pity we have only enough for the long twenty-fours at present. Then take your station on the forecastle, and give me a sharp word about everything which you observe."

While these commands were being obeyed, the Narragansett had been sighted, and the surprised English ships had suddenly awakened to life. Over across the bay the frigate had filled away at once, come by the wind, and was beating up toward them, followed by the brig. Signals were flying on the flagship, a huge liner, and what they had lost by negligence the English bade fair to recover by their prompt manœuvring. Some of the other ships were evidently weighing anchor in obedience to the

signal, and their yards were soon covered with canvas as they got under way gradually, and followed the other two vessels.

The lieutenant commanding the patrol boat also awakened to action promptly, and the smart schooner, handily sailed, was headed across the supposed path of the American ship. A seaman had been stationed in the main chains of the Narragansett as soon as the water began to shoal, and was heaving lead. Whirling the heavy piece of metal on the end of the leadline around his head in great vertical circles with all the force of his arm, he threw it upward and forward through the air, in a graceful curve, until it struck the water, and sank rapidly to the bottom. As the speedy ship drew past the up and down line, the leadsman announced the depth of the water, which was shoaling rapidly.

The Narragansett, deeply laden for a long cruise, drew about sixteen feet of water forward; she was a rather large frigate for her class, being of about eleven hundred tons burden. Fairford was sailing over one of the great banks of sand that have been the terror of mariners in these waters from time immemorial. The ordinary ship-channel was far over to starboard; but Fairford, not daring to change the direction of his ship for fear of falling into the open arms of the English fleet, steadily held his course. Salvation or freedom were that way or not at all; and a wrecked ship were far better than a recaptured one. Meanwhile, every expedient that could be thought of to increase the speed of the ship had been tried. Tackles had been clapped on the running gear, the sheets had been

hauled home, and the yards mastheaded to the extremest limit, until the sails set like boards. Whips had been rigged, and every sail was kept well wetted down so as to lose not even a capful of wind.

"If I can only get clear of that frigate," said Fairford to himself, "before she gets within range, or drive her off before she can do any damage after she does, I shall have a chance. Thank goodness, we're the heavier ship. Those fellows over in the bay there are out of the game, and with the whole sea to manœuvre in, and night coming on, we can manage to escape those two yonder, I think."

The two ships at sea, previously uncertain as to his movements, were now attempting to close in upon him, but they were still hull down beneath the horizon.

"What are you afraid of, Blake?" asked Margaret, looking up at him as he happened to turn and face her.

"Of nothing. That is, nothing for myself — unless it's you."

"Never mind me — what do you anticipate, I mean? Shall we be able to get away from those ships?"

"I hope not," interrupted Sir James, ungraciously; "this cruise cannot end any too soon for me."

"Why," said Fairford, "if that frigate out yonder succeeds in getting near enough to us to damage a spar or carry away a mast, she can hold us in play, and we will be delayed until the others come up and capture us."

"Can't you drive off that smaller ship with this larger one?"

"Certainly," replied Fairford, smiling; "but you must remember that one little wounded spar might cause our capture by the others."

"I see," murmured Margaret, thoughtfully.

"And this one over here, to the left?" queried Evelyn.

"Well, we have not worried about her heretofore, though she does appear to loom up rather pluckily. I hardly think she can do much damage, though — but now I must go to my duties. Sir James, you will surely take the two ladies below if the bullets begin to fly?"

"All right, I 'll take care of them; but if you will surrender this ship to me now, as His Majesty's representative, — you can hardly escape, you know, — I will insure your good treatment on parole and speedy return home by exchange."

"Sir," replied Fairford, turning proudly away, "we did not cut out this ship for the purpose of surrendering her, and we are by no means captured yet."

The schooner was nearing them rapidly. Suddenly her commander threw her up into the wind, and hove to, instead of crossing the bows of the onrushing frigate, as he had intended, judging that the shoal water into which she was running would cause Fairford to shift his helm in order to head toward the open sea. The American vessel would therefore necessarily pass within a short distance of him; and though her broadside would probably sink him, yet he was willing to sacrifice himself in the

hope that a lucky shot might cripple his huge antagonist, and so throw her into the arms of the squadron. It was a bold, a desperate manœuvre, and it was met with an equally bold reply. The Narragansett rapidly drew up as if to pass the schooner.

"Shall I send the men to the port battery, sir," called Ludlow, uneasily.

"Never mind the battery, sir. We won't use it on this little fellow," answered Fairford, leaning over the break of the poop, and looking ahead.

The captain then directed the quartermaster at the wheel to cross his order, and shift the helm in the direction opposite to the command which would be given; that is, if the helm were ordered to starboard it was to be put to port, or *vice versa*. The Narragansett was very near the schooner now. The men on the latter could be seen plainly upon her flush deck, with its low rail. They were clustered about the six-pounders and the long twelve on a pivot forward, with which she was armed. What was the frigate about to do? Why didn't the Yankee change his course, thought the Englishman.

"Ah! now is the time," he ejaculated, as he heard the expected order given loudly.

"Port! Hard a port!"

Anticipating that the Narragansett would turn away and bring her broadside to bear upon him, he had instructed his men to aim high and try to cut a spar.

"Stand by!" he shouted.

To his astonishment, the unexpected suddenly happened. Instead of swinging to starboard in

accordance with the order he had heard, and heading out for the bay, the great bows of the frigate turned swiftly, and came rushing down at full speed upon him.

There was a moment of intense confusion on board the English schooner at this desperate move. The captain himself sprang to the wheel, shouting orders; the booms of the schooner were swung out; but she hung in the wind, and gathered headway so slowly that the Narragansett, going at full speed, crashed irresistibly into her. An opportune wave at the moment of impact lifted the frigate's bow, and her sharp cut-water drove through the frail schooner like a knife. The startled English crew, dazed by the suddenness of the manœuvre, and the contradictory orders they had received, had neglected their opportunity; and the only gun fired was the long Tom, the shot from which carried away one of the quarter-boats of the frigate, but did no other damage.

The English captain, filled with rage and despair at this bitter ending of his fruitless sacrifice, snapped a pistol at the head of a man leaning out over the taffrail aft, as the Narragansett, forging ahead, first clove asunder, and then ran completely over the little schooner, driving the shattered halves away on either side. The bullet struck Sir James full in the face. He pitched forward, dead, without a word, and fell from the ship down upon the shattered piece of wreckage in the water, upon which the English captain had stood. Evelyn and Margaret screamed wildly.

"Sir James, Sir James!" cried the former; "he

has fallen into the sea! Stop the ship! Lower a boat!" But Fairford, who had been standing near enough to see that the bullet had struck Sir James, knew that his cruise, under any flag, was ended forever, and shook his head in denial. Had there been a thousand men struggling in the water at the moment, he would have paid no heed.

The Narragansett, although she had sustained some damage forward, was still rushing ahead. The other frigate, a rapid sailer, was coming down upon them with tremendous speed. To stop or to change the course would be to invite an open conflict and certain recapture. How far the shoals extended out across his path he did not know, though it was evident that he would soon ascertain. He sprang back to the weather side again, paying no heed to the trembling women, whose very existence he seemed to forget. Every instinct of the sailor was now roused in him. He jumped up on the rail, and then stepped upon the sheer ratlines again, and leaned far out to watch the sea. The lead whirled in dangerous proximity to his head, but he heeded it not. The monotonous song of the man in the chains heaving it rang in his ear menacingly.

"By the mark — five, by the deep — four, and a quarter less four, and a half three, by the mark — three." That meant but a few inches of clear water, a few inches between life and death, safety and destruction, beneath the keel; but he could not change the course, whatever the depth of water; he must hold on as he was; the lead was useless to him.

THE ENGLISH CAPTAIN, FILLED WITH RAGE AND DESPAIR, SNAPPED HIS PISTOL.—*Page* 212.

"Forward, there; take that man out of the chains," he shouted. "He only intimidates me with his soundings."

The shallow water was now boiling and foaming about the bows of the ship.

"She shoals, she shoals," shouted Ludlow, frantically, from the forecastle. "Port the helm — hard-a-port!"

"Avast!" cried Fairford, promptly; "steady with the helm! Keep her as she is."

At this moment a low shudder ran through the ship, followed by a violent shock.

"She strikes, she strikes," screamed the men forward. Then the foretop-gallant mast carried away with a mighty crash.

"Aloft, some of you, and clear away the wreck," shouted Fairford, promptly, but making no other sign.

Her speed at once diminished; slower and slower she went. The other stays and masts creaked and groaned under the terrific straining; but being new and strong, all the rest held so far. She had taken ground, but had not yet completely lost her way.

"It 's all over with us," thought Fairford, in despair, as he saw his gallant attempt apparently coming to nought. But no, not yet — she was moving still. In agonized suspense he hung over the side, looking at the foaming green water, discolored by the mud and sand she was raising. Would she come to rest, or would she go on? The seconds were long. Over in the bay to starboard, the frigate was coming down like a storm upon the Narragan-

sett, the other ships following hard upon her heels, or stretching out across the entrance to spread a broad clew and enclose the prey in the net. With a sick heart, and full of anxiety, Fairford watched the sea.

Was she going over the shoals? Was there deep water beyond? The motion increased, at first slowly, then faster and faster. Thank God! she was certainly going ahead. With a quiver of disgust at her contact with the bottom, she finally slid into deep water again. Ludlow and the man who had been watching with him broke into cheers. Hurrah! There was still a chance for freedom.

The oncoming frigate was now in range of the guns on the main deck. He would try a shot from the long twenty-fours in the battery. Old Bill Thompson, the best shot of the crew, took long and careful aim before he fired. When the smoke cleared away there was a rent in the foresail of the pursuer. The men cheered loudly, and the Englishman closed in steadily, his eighteens not yet within range. The next shot passed across his bows, cutting the forestay; he was nearer now, and pluckily holding on. The third shot carried away the foretop-gallant mast.

By this time a half-dozen guns in the battery had been manned by the improvised crews, and a perfect rain of solid shot, which was poured upon her, and to which she could not respond, carried away more head sail, and finally put the little frigate, which had been so gallantly handled, hopelessly out of the running. Falling off, she drifted away, firing harm-

less broadsides the while from her smaller guns. The way to the sea was open. The Narragansett was soon rolling in the deep swell of the ocean. There was nothing afloat that could catch her.

At last they were free!

Book V

THE CRUISE OF THE NARRAGANSETT

CHAPTER XXXI

Fairford Picks up a Crew

BY the time the Narragansett got well clear of the Capes from which she took her departure, the night had fallen. As soon as it became entirely dark, she bore up to the northeast on the port tack, hoping to elude the British ships from Lynn Haven Bay which had stretched out in determined pursuit, and the ships at sea, which had been closing in as well. The wrecked foretop-gallant mast had been previously replaced, and the ship was doing everything that humanity could ask of wood and canvas. She slipped through the water with the grace of a swan and the speed of a swallow.

As the night wore away, one by one the lights on the pursuing ships gradually receded and disappeared in the moonless darkness about the horizon. Fairford and Ludlow both remained on the deck constantly, neglecting no precaution which their skill and experience could dictate to ensure the escape of the frigate, which delighted them with the revelation she was making of her marvellous speed and seaworthy qualities. In spite of the tremendous pace, as Rhodes the theological expert said, her decks were "as dry as a church floor or a parson's sermon." During the night the tired crew slept where they could about the decks, but responded to every demand made upon them by their officers with cheerful alacrity.

It was Fairford's present purpose boldly to endeavor to pass the blockading ships before the port, and enter Boston harbor, where he hoped to complete his crew and then get to sea again. His situation was still somewhat precarious. To properly man her the Narragansett required a crew of over three hundred, with officers corresponding; he had less than a hundred and Ludlow was his only officer. It is true the latter was a host alone, but the work which would be devolved upon the two of them would be excessive and difficult, almost to a prohibitive degree. He had no watch and division officers, no sailing-master, no midshipmen, no marines, no surgeon, and not even a surgeon's mate.

He was embarrassed further by the presence of the two women, and was of course in no condition whatever to meet an enemy. For the rest, after a hasty examination, he found, as he had heard, that the Narragansett was amply provisioned for a long cruise; the water casks were filled, the magazines thoroughly provided, and but for the other deficiencies enumerated, he would have struck boldly out into the ocean on a cruise.

When the morning broke, the two haggard officers, worn out by the two sleepless nights full of wear and strain through which they had passed, intently surveyed the ocean. In the direction whence they had come there was not a sail in sight, they had absolutely run away from them all; but forward the rising sun was reflected from the sails of a large ship, which looked like an armed merchantman or privateer to the officers who eagerly scanned her through their glasses. Whatever she was, she had detected

the Narragansett as soon as she had been seen, and her course was suddenly changed with an obvious and most pressing desire to get away.

Now it was no part of Fairford's plans to pursue strange sails at that time, and strict prudence would have dictated that he neglect the ship which had been sighted and continue upon his course. But the prospect was too inviting to one of his daring nature, and even with the disadvantages enumerated, he felt able to cope with the force of the fleeting stranger, which, it was seen in a very short time, was no match for his ship; so he squared away boldly in pursuit. About eight bells in the early morning watch, therefore, he came within gunshot of the chase, which had been rapidly overhauled. A shot in front of her bows, immediately followed by one close across them, brought to the stranger. Ludlow boarded her, and in a short time returned in high glee with great news.

"She is an English ship," he reported, "with a hundred and fifty American prisoners on board of her, bound for England. Most of them are captured privateersmen."

Fairford jumped at the possibilities of the situation at once. Here was an opportunity for recruiting his crew which perhaps might obviate the necessity of making a harbor with the consequent risk of capture and with the further risk of a prolonged blockade. He went over to the captured ship herself, had the prisoners brought on deck and addressed them briefly, reciting the stirring events of the past two days to stimulate their imagination and enkindle their patriotism, and closed with a ringing appeal to them to ship with him for the cruise.

The larger proportion of the delighted men responded immediately, and eagerly pressed forward, offering to sign the muster roll at once. Among them were the captain and two lieutenants of a captured privateer — capable men apparently — who agreed to serve as watch and division officers, to the great relief of the young captain. Placing the prize, the British crew having replaced their former captives under hatches, in charge of the mate of a merchant vessel who had been among the prisoners and preferred to return home, with instructions to make Boston and report if possible, Fairford trans-shipped the new men to the Narragansett, and then filled away to the eastward.

Providence had been kind to him; although still somewhat short handed the number he lacked was not great and he now had a sufficient crew to work the ship efficiently and man the guns; and three additional officers as well, who would require but little training by Ludlow and himself to enable them to perform the duties of their new stations most acceptably. This profitable morning's work had been a great relief to him, and if he could only find a surgeon in the flotsam and jetsam of the sea, his conscience and his course would be perfectly clear.

It was true the Americans had not hitherto required much from the surgeons on their ships after their actions with the enemy, but one never knew what might happen, and a doctor appeared to be an absolute necessity. Nevertheless, he abandoned his former intention, and decided not to attempt to make a harbor, but to sweep the sea for the English. When he reached his ship, the two girls had come up on

deck and were surveying the prize with deep interest. She had also filled away and started back for Boston. Ludlow had told them of the circumstances of the capture and the probable outcome of it, and Fairford completed their information.

"Where is that ship going?" was the first question Margaret asked.

"Back to Boston if she can get there, which is doubtful."

"Oh, why did n't you send us back in her?" exclaimed both girls in concert.

"I deemed it unsafe to allow you to go on that unarmed prize; she will probably be captured before she makes the harbor."

"At least you might have allowed me to send a letter to relieve father," replied Margaret.

"And I should like to have forwarded one to Sir James, Captain Fairford, if by any chance he survived his fall, as I sincerely hope."

Fairford knew of course that Sir James had been killed, but he had mercifully spared Evelyn and allowed her to remain under the impression that he had merely fallen overboard, and possibly had been picked up from the floating piece of wreck.

"It 's not too late," he responded promptly, and the Narragansett, in obedience to his orders, was soon rushing after the prize again. Ludlow, with masterly seamanship, brought her alongside, and both vessels hove to once more. The young girls descended to the cabin to write their letters and Fairford availed himself of the opportunity to compile a brief report of his actions for the Navy Department. The letters were soon ready, and after they had been delivered

to the new master of the prize, the two ships separated again and each resumed her course. The prize was subsequently recaptured, however, and of course the letters and report were not delivered.

There was now much for the two officers to do, and little opportunity was afforded them for the present for conversation with the two girls, who indeed found ample occupation in overhauling Evelyn's wardrobe, and altering some of her clothing to fit the smaller figure of Margaret. Fairford and Ludlow, with the assistance of the three officers mentioned, divided the crew, now numbering nearly two hundred and fifty men, into the two watches, and rated and stationed the men at quarters and for the ordinary routine work of the ship. Muster-rolls were prepared and signed, and storerooms ransacked for clothing and uniforms and the magazines and provision rooms more carefully inspected than before.

The dolphin striker, martingales, bobstays, and one of the whisker booms and the broken cutwater, which had been carried away and smashed in the collision with the English schooner the night before, were replaced and repaired, the damage not being serious. When the night came again and the watches were set for the first time since the capture, everybody felt that great things had been accomplished toward getting the men on the ship in the necessary trim for the proper service of a man-of-war.

Leaving the deck in charge of Berry, the former captain of a privateer, a gallant young sailor of good birth and breeding, who had been rated as acting second lieutenant, and of whose qualifications for his office Fairford had been able to satisfy himself from

the observation he had been able to make of his work during the day, the two officers after a brief "good-night" sought their cabins for a much needed rest. The original crew which had cut out the Narragansett, also enjoyed the luxury of a night in, as by Fairford's direction they kept no watch until the morning. The prisoners from which the crew had been so opportunely recruited proved themselves a willing, hardy set of men, who easily adapted themselves to their situation. The good fortune which had smiled upon them hitherto had not yet deserted them, and even had other things in store for them.

CHAPTER XXXII

An Old Friend Again

IT was morning again on this ship of surprises. Refreshed by their undisturbed night, after breakfast the old Narragansetts and the new men from the prize, who had scarcely recovered from their feelings of joy over their recapture and release from confinement, were mustered in the gangway. The Articles of War were read to them, the oaths were administered, the muster-roll was signed, and they were regularly entered upon the ship's papers.

Grog was served, and immediately after Fairford beat to quarters and for several hours the crew were exercised at the guns, the drill culminating in a short target practice in which some excellent shooting was displayed. The men were then divided into squads, and practice with small arms and further drill was had. Similar exercises, varied with drill in making and taking sail, sending down and crossing light yards, etc., filled in a large part of the afternoon.

Though some of the new-comers, especially those used to the greater freedom of the privateer as compared to a man-of-war, sailor-like, grumbled somewhat at the hard work, the example of the older men, who could well appreciate the necessity and value of this labor, and finally their own better sense as well, enabled them all to enter upon their duties with a

will. The new officers, who were of course familiar with the service of the guns, and thorough seamen as well, acceptably filled their new stations, striving to act in accordance with the minutiæ of regulation and long established naval practice as it was explained to them, with a zeal which greatly delighted the captain.

"I tell you what, Ludlow," said the latter to his first lieutenant, during a pause in the drill on the following morning, "I 'm delighted with those fellows. The officers are doing extremely well and the crew are following their lead in first-class style. Let us have a week to round them out in, and I think we can safely tackle anything of our own size."

"I agree with you, captain, they are a likely lot and will soon be in shape; but have you given up all thought of going into Boston?"

"Yes. The chances of our getting out are too much against us, and 't would be no easy matter to get in. If I could only pick up a doctor somewhere about here I should be perfectly satisfied."

"What would your course be then?" said Ludlow, an unusual question from a lieutenant to a captain perhaps, but in private conversation like this, the difference in station between the two friends — and there is a vast difference in degree though only one in rank, between the commander of a vessel and his executive officer — was largely forgotten.

"I think in that case I would square away before the northeast trades and make for the Indian Ocean around Cape Good Hope. Perhaps once there we could repeat Porter's lucky experience on this side of the South Pacific. There are lots of English merchant ships thereabouts and some few frigates as well,

I fancy, which have not had the opportunity the others have enjoyed for distinguishing themselves, and we might pick up a rich prize or two and then have a chance to show that this frigate was up to the mark set by Hull, Decatur, and the rest."

"I think that would be an excellent plan," responded Ludlow. "Very few, if any, of our war vessels have ever been in those waters, at least not since the war began."

"Sail ho!" shouted the man at the masthead.

"Now it would be beyond belief, Bob," said Fairford, smiling, "if that were our doctor."

"It would be lucky, Blake, but not beyond belief, either. I am ready to believe anything of this ship when I look back on the past three days."

The officer of the deck had made the usual inquiries of the lookout, and by Fairford's direction, the course of the Narragansett had been at once changed so that she would approach the stranger. Trusting in his known speed, the captain felt it safe to take a nearer look at her. The men who had been at quarters, returned to the guns, after handling the braces, though Fairford, who had no mind to risk a serious engagement with his green crew at this juncture, was more prepared to run than to fight as the case might suggest. The reported sail had also changed her course, evidently having sighted the Narragansett, and the two ships were sailing as directly toward each other as the wind permitted.

Ludlow, glass in hand, had gone up to the cross-trees, and had made careful inspection of the stranger rapidly nearing them. It was evident to him that she was a heavy warship, much heavier than the

Narragansett. Fairford had about made up his mind under the circumstances to show her his heels, and was only waiting Ludlow's report before executing the necessary manœuvres. When that officer reached the deck therefore, he questioned him eagerly.

"She's a large ship, sir," Ludlow reported, "a man-of-war, possibly a fifty gun frigate or a razee. She has no colors flying that I can see — "

"Yes, yes, we can see that much from the deck. What do you think she is?"

"Well, sir," said Ludlow, hesitating, "it's hardly possible, but I believe she's an American, and what's more — " He stopped, not liking to make a prophecy whose non-fulfilment would make him ridiculous. "I believe it would be well for you to take a look at her yourself, Captain Fairford," he continued finally.

"Take the deck," said Fairford quickly, handing him the trumpet, "and give me the glass."

He promptly sprang in the rigging and was soon standing on the cross-trees. The ship was nearer now, and after a long, careful inspection, he closed the glass, and said to himself with a satisfied smile, "We won't take any harm from that ship." He descended to the deck at once and looked at Ludlow and nodded.

"Gentlemen," said he to the other officers who had assembled about him, "we'll stand on as we are. I think we need fear nothing from the stranger."

"What is that, Blake?" asked Margaret, who was standing aft with Evelyn, as the captain turned around and glanced at them.

"A ship, Margaret," answered Fairford, smiling.

"I see that, of course," she said with much disdain,

"but what are you about to do? Will we have another dreadful battle?"

"Not this time, I think. We are merely going to pick up a doctor."

"Are doctors picked up in mid-ocean in this way?" said Evelyn, haughtily, the two girls imagining themselves the subjects of a jest on the part of the captain.

"Sometimes, Miss Heathcote," replied Fairford, smiling.

"Well, since you get such wonderful things from the ocean, sir," said Margaret, "could n't you pick up a lady's maid or two and some more clothing for us?"

"We certainly do need some more bonnets," added Evelyn, gravely.

"It is not impossible," answered the captain. "I shall certainly place at your disposal the first I can find," he added, as he bowed and turned away.

"How hateful men can be," remarked Margaret, before he had escaped out of earshot.

"Yes, especially when they are in command," added Evelyn.

The easy indifference of the captain at the approach of the strange sail which, it was now evident even to the men upon the decks, was a much heavier frigate than their own, excited a great deal of attention. They knew their ship was in no condition to engage in so unequal a combat, and they wondered why the captain did not cut and run. They hardly knew what to make of it. The old Narragansetts, however, had every confidence not only in the courage and ability of their captain, but in his common sense as well, and like trusting children, as sailors are, they

told themselves that "the old man" knew what he was doing, and therefore reassured the others.

The American flag had been flying from the gaff for some time, and as they looked upon the stranger, the stars and stripes broke out from her gaff as well. This meant nothing, however; it was a custom, perfectly allowable, to sail under any colors, though a necessity to fight under your own. Two ships manœuvring for position prior to a combat, frequently displayed all sorts of colors before beginning the engagement.

Fairford leaned over the break of the poop, looking at the approaching stranger. He was perfectly satisfied now. At the same time, old Rhodes, who had been critically examining the frigate through the gangway, turned and walked aft, muttering to himself, —

"Douse my toplights, if that there ain't the old —"

"Rhodes!" said the captain, sharply, overhearing him, "keep your reflections and discoveries to yourself for a few moments."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the veteran, grinning.

As the two ships neared each other, it was seen that the men of the larger one were at quarters, and her decks were crowded with a brilliant group of officers in blue uniforms. Fairford held on fearlessly and steadily. Suddenly the stranger swept up into the wind gracefully, and backed her main topsail; Fairford did the same with his ship, and the two ships were thus hove to within hailing distance of each other, the stranger having the weather-gage.

"Ahoy the ship! What ship is that?" came down the breeze from the larger frigate.

"The United States Ship Narragansett, Captain Blakely Fairford," responded the latter, springing upon the rail. "What ship is that?"

"The United States Ship Constitution, Commodore Charles Stewart."

"Three cheers for the old Constitution!" cried Fairford, waving his hand. In obedience to the signal, all the Narragansetts sprang upon the bulwarks and into the rigging, and cheered again and again; her flag was dipped at the same time. Courteously acknowledging the salute by raising his hat and waving it, and causing his own colors to be dipped, Commodore Stewart hailed once more.

"Where from and whither bound?"

"From the Chesapeake Bay, where we cut out this ship from the British, and bound east on a cruise." The ships had drawn nearer now, and conversation was not difficult.

"Do I understand you to say that you cut out your ship from the British; that she is a prize? I thought she was an American ship," said Stewart.

"She was," answered Fairford, "but she was taken when Washington was captured by the enemy. We cut her out three days ago."

It was the Constitution's turn now. Such a roar of exultation and delight came from the throats of the four hundred men who made up her crew, that you could have heard it if you had been hull down on the horizon.

"Did you say the Capital had been captured, sir?"

"Yes, sir, and burned, though the British retreated almost immediately. Can you spare me a doctor,

one or two lieutenants and some marines and a few midshipmen, sir?"

"Is there anything else you would like to have?" was the reply, while a gigantic laugh came from the Constitution. "But come aboard and we will talk it over. Meantime, I think you had better fill away again and get a little farther off, Captain Fairford," said the older man; "we don't want you to cut out the old Constitution as well, by way of keeping your hand in."

After obeying the order of his superior, Fairford, accompanied by Ludlow, entered a boat and was rowed over to the noble old frigate. Their hearts went out to her as she lay gently rising and falling on the waves; a battle-scarred veteran now, with such a record of successful victory as made her, to her enemies, the terror of the sea.

CHAPTER XXXIII

No Ladies' Maids on the Constitution

WHEN the news spread, as it did with surprising swiftness at the beginning of each one of her successful cruises, that the old Constitution had got to sea again, the British public waited with bated breath for news of the mighty blow she was sure to strike; and captains of frigates equally with privateers and skippers of merchant ships, drew their breaths uneasily until, having accomplished some mighty feat of arms, she was safely ensconced in a harbor again.

She had laughed at blockades, disdained pursuits, defied squadrons; and under the successive command of three great captains, Hull, Bainbridge and Stewart, had never failed to return from a cruise without the laurels of victory wreathed about her mastheads. The flags of the Guerrière, the Java, the Cyane and the Levant, she brought home as trophies to her country. During the two years and a half of war, she captured three frigates and a heavy sloop-of-war (actually destroying the two largest frigates), carrying a total of over one hundred and fifty-four guns. She killed and wounded over three hundred and twenty-five men upon their decks, taking nearly one thousand prisoners; and on two separate occasions escaped,

by the exercise of the highest seamanship and skill on the part of her officers and crews, from two large British squadrons after a long and hard pursuit.

In addition to all this, she captured property to the amount of nearly two millions of dollars, an immense sum for her day, and all this, with the loss in personnel of only nineteen killed and forty-five wounded, and in material, of a few spars and some rigging, easily replaced. Within an hour after any of her fights, she was perfectly capable of engaging on equal terms another enemy similar to the one just captured. The last order of the British Admiralty concerning her had been to the effect that English ships were to hunt her in couples! Not a very effective device, as it proved, since she was at this moment fresh from her last victory, and in some respects her most remarkable and brilliant action, the twin capture of one of the pairs aforesaid, the frigate Cyane and the sloop Levant!

As soon as the exigency had been made plain to him, Stewart, who was bound home, generously allowed Fairford to take such of his officers as he could spare who were willing to go with him. The young captain therefore secured the services of a surgeon and a surgeon's mate, two more young lieutenants, several midshipmen, with a marine lieutenant, a sergeant and sixteen men. He also borrowed uniforms for himself and Ludlow, and coats at least for the volunteer officers he had on his ship.

"Would you like to have anything else, my young friend?" said Commodore Stewart, after all these requests had been cheerfully complied with.

"Well, yes, sir. There are two other things that we would like to have if you can spare them," continued Fairford.

"What are they, my lad? Do not let the remarkable modesty that you have exhibited hitherto restrain you at this stage," answered Stewart, smiling jovially.

"Well, sir, we would like a couple of ladies' maids."

"A couple of what!"

"Ladies' maids, commodore, if you please."

"Ladies' maids! Women! Good heavens, sir, do you think this ship is a female seminary? You 'll be asking for millinery next."

"Yes, sir, we 'll take all that you have on board in the way of women gearing."

Stewart sank back in his chair aghast.

"What do you mean, sir; are you trifling with me, or have you lost your senses?" he cried sternly, looking into Fairford's grave face.

"Neither, sir, but we have two ladies on board, and as I have been so successful in picking up a crew and officers in the ocean, they suggested that I might somewhere find those things."

"Well, may I be dashed!" exclaimed the commodore, recovering himself, while Fairford explained the presence of the two women to him. "So you cut out ships and women as well. No, I cannot help you to the maids and the millinery, but would n't you like me to take the ladies back with me to the United States?"

"Yes, sir," said Fairford, reluctantly, yet his heart sank as had Ludlow's sometime previously, at the thought of being separated from his sweetheart, just

as he was enjoying the pleasure of her society. The old commodore laughed again.

"I see how it is," he said. "Well, if they wish to go back with us, sing out and I'll send a boat over for them. Meantime, keep the Narragansett well away from me. I hardly feel safe as it is with such a desperate crowd so near by."

The two officers with a curious mixture of joy and relief at their good luck, and sadness over the expected parting, soon reached their ship, whither the other officers who were to sail with them had preceded them. Fairford and Ludlow walked up to the two girls.

"Margaret," said the former, "Commodore Stewart expects to get back to the United States in a few weeks, after doing a little more cruising, and he says he will take you and Miss Heathcote up to Boston with him if you wish to go."

Both girls started eagerly, and then noted the utter dejection in the attitudes of the two men before them. They really were enjoying the cruise, and the spirit of adventure got hold of them, not to speak of other circumstances. Boston, for instance, was a long way from Virginia. There was no reason why Evelyn should go back, and she therefore nodded in response to the mute interrogation of Margaret's glance.

"I feel it my duty," said Fairford, painfully, "to say that you ought to go with him."

"Most certainly, most certainly," responded Ludlow, gloomily.

"Oh, you wish to be rid of us, do you?" said Margaret, decisively; "well, then, we'll stay where we are. I presume your ship will be returning home sometime or other."

For the life of them, the two men could not restrain their delight. Old Rhodes, who was always opportunely around when anything was going on, had pretended to busy himself over a rope while he listened to the conversation. The whole crew of the Narragansett of course knew of Margaret's gallant ride to save the ship; it was a never ending topic of discussion among the men. They knew she had taken Spicer's place, and that Spicer had been promised the rating of a boatswain's mate if he succeeded in his adventure; they understood perfectly, therefore, when old Rhodes daringly lifted his hand and called out, —

"Lads! Hurrah for the little bosun's mate! She stays with us, and we've good luck aboard." In the cheers which succeeded, Margaret was renamed, and "the little bosun's mate" she continued to be thereafter.

"I shall have to suppress that old man," said Fairford to himself, looking at Margaret the while to see if she were annoyed; but when he found that her eyes were shining with merriment and pleasure, he said nothing. At this moment Commodore Stewart, tired of waiting, hailed: "Well, sir, have you any passengers for us?"

"No, sir," answered Fairford, his delight pervading his voice.

"Good-bye," cried Stewart, laughing and waving his hand, "a lucky cruise to you, and I hope you will pick up those maids somewhere."

So with mingled cheers, the two ships filled away and parted.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Yarning on the Forecastle

SEVERAL weeks had elapsed during which the Narragansett, favored by the northeast trades, had been steadily running to the southward. For days it had not been necessary to touch a rope or a brace, though of course exercise with sails and spars had been a part of the daily drill. Fairford had been brought up in too thorough a school not to realize the absolute necessity of habitual practice to render the men able to get the best results from the delicate, deadly instrument committed to their charge.

To a landsman, the word delicate as applied to the enormous mass of wood and iron and rope which made up the ship, might appear incongruous. Yet it was the delicate touch of the designer which gave the fine lined hull its capacity for speed without the sacrifice of strength and stability. It was the nice calculation of the shipbuilder which determined the proportions of the lofty spars and the broad yard-arms. It was the accurate care of those who loaded her which determined her set upon the waves. Above all, it was the nice discrimination, the truly delicate perception amounting to intuition, which enabled those who commanded her to get from her the greatest amount of speed of which she was capable with the minimum of wear and tear.

Born sailors like Hull, or Stewart, or Fairford soon became thoroughly *en rapport* with the ships they commanded, and after a preliminary testing of qualities and a little deft experimenting, their vessels actually seemed to represent their moods. Nothing manufactured gets so near to a man's inner consciousness as does his ship. There is such a sense of mutual dependence between them; the possibilities of action, though of course dependent upon the wind, are so unlimited, that the ship becomes as it were a responsive personality.

A fort or a field is but a piece of ground, chosen for certain advantages it presents, and rarely unique in the possession of them. A ship to a sailor is the world itself. If it go down, he goes with it; the wide circle of the horizon shows him no haven but his own deck. If the fort become untenable or the army be outflanked, the position may be abandoned, and another one chosen. When the ship goes, all is lost, the only alternative being another ship; and so it is that the sea warrior loves his habitation as no soldier does his post.

And yet, strangely enough, nowhere is there so much grumbling and vocal discontent at present conditions as one finds in a ship full of men. Possibly it may arise from the fact that there is an entire absence of that favorite receptacle for masculine discontent, that channel of marital dissatisfaction, women and wives, from the ship's deck; but be that as it may, the fact remains that it is not the present ship to which the sailor's vocal approbation is usually given, but the one in which he sailed last, of which he talks and to which he refers as a marvel

of efficiency and a paradise afloat. To her officers and crew his meed of praise is given, and in her favor disadvantageous comparisons are drawn with the present. In times of stress, or strain, or danger, however, real things come to the surface at sea and elsewhere, and then it is the deck upon which he stands to which he openly gives his heart.

The excellent material of the Narragansett's crew had responded in a measure exceeding his highest hopes to the constant and fatiguing drill which Fairford had called upon them to undergo, and the results went far beyond his expectations.

"Except on the old Constitution," the captain was wont to say to Ludlow (he had the common failing, you see), "I don't believe a better or more efficient set of men ever stepped a deck." But in his secret heart he made no reservations. As usual, a great emphasis had been laid upon target practice, and in rough weather as well as fair, the men had been trained to shoot deliberately at a mark. They had long passed the equator now, and had lost the trades. It was blowing fresh, however, and the ship was booming along on the port tack, lying as close to the wind as possible to keep her, the weather leeches of the topsails lifting and the bowlines hauled out as taut as human hands could stretch them.

Five bells had just struck in the second dog watch. Supper was over for both watches, and the decks forward were filled with men enjoying themselves in their own way before the night watches were called. Forward on the weather side of the forecastle, a place by the way particularly reserved for the petty officers and veteran seamen by tacit consent among the crew,

a little group of worthies surrounded Master Joseph Rhodes. Smoking a short black pipe, he lay extended upon the deck, his can of grog by his side, his head resting against the anchor flukes. Around him the men sat or sprawled in accordance with their fancy.

"Talkin' about gales," said an old shellback, with great deliberation, "one of the wust gales I ever seen was in the Indian Ocean . . ."

"Mates, d' ye remember that 'ere song about the Indian Ocean?" interrupted another man, and giving the first seaman no time to answer, he trolled out the following: —

"'Twas the good ship Guyascutis,
Jist from the Chiney Sea,
With the wind a-lee, an' the capstan free
To ketch the summer breeze.

"'Twas in the Indian Ocean,
Jist as the bell struck three,
We spied the great sea sarpint,
Lyin' pensive on the sea.

"We passed his tail at noon-day,
I was a heavin' of the lead,
'Twas three bells in the dog watch,
Before we passed his head."

"What was you a heavin' of the lead fer way out in the Indian Ocean, I'd like to know?" queried an auditor.

"Just fer to exercise my arms," answered the man, promptly.

"Yer jaws don't need no exercisin'," said the first speaker, severely. "As I was a sayin' when interrupted by this yere ribald song cuttin' athwart my hawse, the wust gale I ever saw was in the Indian

Ocean, which I ain't never seen no sea sarpint in nuther. Why, it blowed so hard, mates, an' the ship heeled over so far, that whenever we wanted to take a bath, we jist run out on the lee foreyard-arm an' wropped our legs aroun' the lifts an' leaned over. At one time we sent a man aloft, an' he was blowed that flat agin' the weather shrouds, that he could n't git up nor down, so 's we had to rig a tackle to him and haul him down slidin' like."

"Wot I 'd like to know," said the man who had sung, seeing a chance to make a hit which was most unprofessional, it being considered a point of honor to cast no doubts upon a shipmate's yarn, "how you could ha' got that tackle rigged to him if nobody could go aloft."

"Blast my eyes," said the seaman, "wot fer do you go to spile a sailor man's yarn by askin' them irreverent questions?"

"That was a pretty bad gale, mates," said old Joe promptly, to prevent a disagreeable argument, "but I know a wuss one than that. We was down in the Pacific once, an' a gale come down on us sudden like, an' one of the men which got ketched in the foretop, slung his legs over the rim of the top to climb down the futtock shrouds, an' the wind was so strong that it jist ravelled his legs out an' left them whippin' aroun' like a lot o' rope yarns. We hauled him back to the top, then . . ."

"Was he dead?" said old Thompson.

"Not much. You see his heart was all right, an' a man's heart ain't connected with his legs, leastaways this 'n 's was n't. When the squall broke, we lowered him to the deck with a gantlin'. An' when the cap-

tain saw him he said he want goin' to have no idlers on his ship; if a man shipped to do some work, he had to make hisself useful somehow, even if his legs was all ravelled out. So he made us put a stop aroun' his waist, to keep him from ravellin' further, an' we used him for a deck swab, which was mighty inconvenient, too, because he was so heavy. Before we got to port, we clean wore out his ravelled legs. He's in a . . . a . . . Amusum now, I think ye call it, an' don't have nothin' to do to make money, but jist exhibits hisself. People actually pays to see him."

"If you believes that there yarn o' yourn yourself, Rhodes," said Thompson, reverting to the mooted point between them, "I can easy understan' how you can swaller that there Jonah story all right. I believe you could swaller the whale itself."

"Why can't we have another song, now?" said one of the men. "Pipe up somebody as can sing."

"I will give you one myself, mates," said Rhodes, gladly, ignoring the inconvenient argument-seeking Thompson, a thing which always exasperated him. "What'll it be?"

"Give us the 'Yankee man-of-war,' mate," was the reply, and the old man at once began trolling out in his rich voice the favorite song of the American Navy in those days. His voice was a deep bass, roughened and hoarsened by the continual calling of commands, but he sang with a rude grace and stirring emphasis the ringing words of what was perhaps the best sea song ever written.

"'T is of a gallant Yankee ship that flew the stripes and stars,
And the whistling wind from the west-nor'-west blew through the pitch-pine spars.

With her starboard tacks aboard, my boys, she hung upon the gale,
On an autumn night we raised the light on the old head of Kinsale.

"It was a clear and cloudless night, and the wind blew steady and strong,
As gayly over the sparkling deep our good ship bowled along;
With the foaming seas beneath her bow the fiery waves she spread,
And bending low her bosom of snow, she buried her lee cathead.

"There was no talk of short'ning sail by him who walked the poop,
And under the press of her pond'ring jib the boom bent like a hoop,
And the groaning water-ways told the strain that held her stout main tack.
But he only laughed as he glanced abaft at a white and silvery track.

"The mid-tide meets in the channel waves that flow from shore to shore,
And the mist hung heavy upon the land from Featherstone to Dunmore;
And that sterling light on Tusker rock, where the old bell tolls the hour,
And the beacon light that shone so bright was quenched on Waterford tower.

"The nightly robes our good ship wore were her three topsails set,
The spanker and her standing jib, the spanker being fast.
'Now, lay aloft, my heroes bold, let not a moment pass!'
And royals and topgallant sails were quickly on each mast.

"What looms upon the starboard bow? What hangs upon the breeze?
'Tis time our good ship hauled her wind abreast the old Saltees;
For by her ponderous press of sail and by her consorts four
We saw our morning visitor was a British man-of-war.

"' Up spoke our noble captain then, as a shot ahead of us passed
'Haul snug your flowing courses, lay your topsail to the mast!'
The Englishmen gave three loud hurrahs from the deck of their covered ark,
And we answered back by a solid broadside from the decks of our patriot bark.

"'Out, booms! Out, booms!' our skipper cried, 'Out, booms, and give her sheet!'
And the swiftest keel that ever was launched shot ahead of the British fleet.
And amidst a thundering shower of shot, with stunsails hoisting away,
Down the North Channel Paul Jones did steer, just at the break of day."

"That 's a good song," said the learned man of the forecastle, looking up from his book. "I 've always thought I 'd like to write a song myself. There was a man once that I heard about, that said he 'd rather have writ a piece o' poetry, an' it was poetry about a graveyard too, than cut out a town, which he was tryin' to take by boardin'."

"A queer fish of a sailor man he must ha' been," commented one old tarry breeches.

"Was n't a sailor man at all," answered the learned man, "he was a soldier."

"Well, that explains it; ye never can count on what a soldier 'll do," said the Benedick, with the hearty contempt of a sailor for his brother of the other service. "Though my wife says she sets great store by some soldiers an' marines she 's know'd in her day."

"Ay," answered the gunner's mate, "ye can 't count on wimmen any mor 'n ye can on marines."

"I never read much any more," said Rhodes to the learned man, "'cept'n' the Bible when I can git

one with big print in it, but I want to know how you come to git so much larnin' an' still be in a fok's'l."

"I'll tell ye how it was," replied the learned man; "when I was a lad my father he says to me, says he, 'I want you to be a priest when you grow up,' and I says, 'No, I don't want to be no priest,' and when I told him that, I can remember well what he said. 'You young fool,' he said, grabbin' me by the ear, 'when you grow up, you'll find out what a good thing I had in store for you, and then it'll be too late; but I did n't see it in that way, and here I am, a Jackie in the forecastle. He made me learn a lot of things before I decided not to be a Holy Joe though, not referring to you, Rhodes, which your name is Joe, though you ain't holy."

"Well, I guess I'm as holy as anybody else on this ship, barrin' the cap'n an' the wimmen, which he is perfessionally, an' them naturally so," complacently said old Joe, who never allowed his moral status or his religious views to be impugned.

"That's so," remarked one of the boatswain's mates, "you're about as good as the best of us aboard so long's there's no Sky Pilot, of course, which they are perfessionally holy sure."

"Chaplains is all right too," said old Joe; "you all want 'em when you're dead, but let's get off this subject, shipmates, or we'll have that 'ere infiddle Thompson expressin' his views, an' I don't want any o' you youngsters to hear him, bein' a man o' strong religious persuadin's myself. Stop swearin', Thompson," he added, as that old seaman vocally resented the remarks. "Damn your eyes, I don't allow nobody to swear in this fok's'l but myself, since I was

converted by that Methody parson last year. You won't stop, eh? Well, then, I'll make ye, an' ye know the Lord'll be on the side of the believer in Jonah, rather than agin' him," said the old man, preparing to rise.

"He'll stop . . . he'll stop, lay down agin'," cried the captain of the foretop, acting the peacemaker's part.

"That's all right, Rhodes," said another, "but wot we want to know is why you don't stop swearin' yourself, if you don't let nobody else do it."

"Because I'm an old man," said Rhodes, "an' I can't unlarn the bad habit of fifty years; but Thompson he's younger'n me. . . ."

"Not much I ain't, I'm forty nine an' a half, an' I can't stop it no more'n you can, an' I don't want to nuther, an' I won't," replied Thompson, stubbornly.

"You've got to do it, matey," said Rhodes, calmly, "besides, we've got ladies on board this ship, an' one o' them saved the ship for us. The little bosun's mate don't do no swearin' at her end o' the ship, leastaways I ain't never heerd her, an' I've been aroun' her considerable, an' the big one is goin' to stop it at this end."

"I never did have no use for wimmen," said the learned man of the forecastle, "perhaps from some idees I got drove into me when my father was thinkin' o' makin' a priest o' me, but that there girl is about half a man anyways. Where'd we be if it hadn't been for her lightin' the light? We'd never have got in."

"William Cotton says," remarked the old carpenter's mate, "that all the officers is in love with one

or t'other o' the young wimmen from the cap'n down."

"Yes," said that melancholy misogynist, the unsuppressed Thompson, "an' they could have the pick of the fok's'l too, 'ceptin' me."

"Go along, Thompson," interjected a quartermaster, "you 've got no more heart in ye than a scuttle-but."

"Now somebody give us another song," said old Rhodes, who did n't care to have any one else abuse his old friend. "You, Thompson, you doubtin' Jonah," he continued with a mixture of Biblical characters, "you 've been a whaler in your day, can't ye let us have a chantey?"

"I don't feel like singin' to-night," said Thompson, with the affectation of a bashful girl, "I 've got a cold."

"Never mind that," said the mate of the hold, "you could n't be any hoarser than you are ordinary, old man, so heave ahead."

"Pipe up, Thompson."

"Give us a good one, can't ye, with a chorus," came from different members of the group.

Thus adjured, after a few preliminary throat clearings, old Thompson began: —

"Come, all ye bold sailors, who sail 'round Cape Horn,
Come, all the bold whalers, who cruise 'round for sperm.
The captain has told us, and I hope 't will prove true
That there 's plenty of sperm whales off the coast of Peru.

"Now, shipmates," he said, as he finished the first verse, "all hands in the chorus.

"Off the coast of Peru,
Off the coast of Peru,

That there's plenty of sperm whales
Off the coast of Peru.

"The first whale we saw near the close of the day.
Our captain came on deck, and thus he did say:
'Now all my bold sailors, pray be of good glee,
For we'll see him in the morning, p'raps under our lee.'

"It was early next morning, just as the sun rose,
The man at the mast-head called out, 'There she blows!'
'Whereaway?' cried our captain, as he sprang up aloft.
'Three points on our lee bow, and scarce two miles off.'

"'Now trace up your yards, boys, we 'll fasten anear.
Get your lines in your boats, see your box lines all clear;
Haul back the mainyard, boys, stand by, each boat's crew,
Lower away, lower away, my brave fellows, do.

"'Now, bend to your oars, boys, just make the boat fly,
But whatever you do, boys, keep clear from his eye.'
The first mate soon struck, and the whale he went down,
While the old man pulled up, and stood by to bend on.

"But the whale soon arose; to the windward he lay.
We hauled up 'longside, and he showed us fair play.
We caused him to vomit, thick blood for to spout,
And in less than ten minutes we rolled him 'fin out.'

"We towed him alongside with many a shout,
That day cut him in, and began to boil out.
Oh, now he's all boiled out and stowed down below,
We're waiting to hear 'em sing out, 'There she blows!'"

The deep voices of the men caught up the familiar refrain, and the chorus ending in a long drawn roaring note was carried aft by the wind, with which it blended in a way mournfully poetic.

CHAPTER XXXV

Whalin' 's the Game

"AY, that 's a good song, Bill," said another sailor, a veteran harpooner, to the old whaler. "Lord bless ye, mates, that 's the sport of the sea. If you want life, whalin' 's the game. When ye see them black backs tumblin' out o' the water, man up aloft in the crow's nest yellin' like he was crazy, 'there she blows . . . blows,' an' it 's hurry and rush a gittin' the boats over an' down in the water, an' the long heart-breakin' pull at racin' speed to see who gits the iron in first. Then you come up quiet like, a stealin' alongside o' him an' drive home the harpoon into his fat back, an' then it 's up tail an' down he goes into the deep, an' the whale line a sizzlin' an' a smokin' out o' the tub, an' the boat dancin' an' jerkin' on top o' the waves, an' you wonder all the time whether you 'll go down with him or not. By an' by, the line slacks up, an' you haul in, an' up he comes once more, bleedin' and blowin', an' then goin' racin' long like mad an' towin' the boat along, all hands lyin' low an' clingin' to the gunnels, until he gits tired an' heaves to for wind; an' then you creeps up to him agin with your boat, an' gives him a lance hard an' deep in the vitals. Then it 's '*starn all for your lives*,' boys, while he gits into his flurry

an' beats the water into foam with his fins an' slaps it with his tail, churnin' it up with a sound like thunder, an' by an' by he rolls over an' lays still, an' you 've got him! It 's like killin' a king, mates."

"None of us ain't killed no kings," said another.

"No, we ain't," said old Rhodes, meditatively, "we ain't got none to kill in America. If we had, I guess we 'd kill 'em right enough, though most of us is out o' practice in that job, but I understand wot he means all right. I 've killed 'em myself, which I means whales not kings."

"Tryin' out ile 's a nasty job, though," said another.

"'T is indeed, mate," replied the old whaler, "but then you know every barrel of ile we git, means so much for all hands."

"Whalin' 's fine," said a third, "it 's much the same as fightin', takes men to do both on 'em."

"Ay," said another, "an' they 're alike in another way, too, all hands shares in the capture, prize money, an' barrel money, jist the same."

"Yes, and in pretty much the same way," said the learned man again; "you throw the prize money at a ladder, and wot sticks to the rounds goes to the crew, and the cap'n and the officers takes the balance, and you put the barrel money in coins in an ile cask and the crew gits wots floats on top."

"Talkin' about prize money," said old Rhodes, who had observed a small form stealing up toward him under the lee of the rail, "I guess little Willie Cotton won't git no more prize money now that he 's servin' females an' gone to nussin' them wimmen aft."

"Yes, I do, beggin' your pardon, sir, an' the little bosun's mate she says t' I can have her share too."

"Good for her," cried one of the seamen, enthusiastically, "an' if she don't git none no other way, she can have part o' my pile."

"An' mine."

"An' mine."

"Well, if it had n't a been for that there ride o' her 'n an' the lightin' of the beacon, we would n't any of us had any prize money," said another.

"We ain't got any at all yet, remember," said Thompson, "unless we git it for cuttin' out this ship."

"Don't spend your prize money, lads, till you git it," said Rhodes, wisely. "Oncest I was comin' down the Pacific on a stout old whaler bound home after a three years' cruise. We was chuck full o' ile, we even had some o' the water casks full, an' a deck load o' all the casks we could beg, or borry, or steal, from any other whaler we come across; never did have such a lucky cruise, an' all hands was feelin' fine at the thought of how they 'd spend their money when they got back to New Bedford. When we got down off Cape Horn it begun to blow, an' blow, an' it blew a steady gale for ten days (like that Indian Ocean yarn o' yourn, Jack), an' we was a beatin', an' a beatin', an' a beatin', tryin' to git around the Horn, the cap'n cursin' an' swearin' terrible, an' all hands mournful an' worked to death. Ship was a strainin' till the ile casks begun to leak, an' then right in the thick of it all, she drifted onto a reef thereabouts an' tore the whole bottom out of her.

"When she struck I fell down the after hatch an'

broke a leg, the rest of the crew they took to the boats an' drove off before the wind an' foundered, leavin' me behind. Presently I come to, an' crawled up on deck, an' I found I was alone, masts all gone, deck load washed away 'ceptin' one plank jammed between the galley an' the try-pots. I hung onto that plank, an' presently the waves swept the old barky off, an' down she went. About this time a queer thing happened. The whale ile from the busted casks got spread out over the ocean, an' the waves calmed down, jist rollin' like, an' there I was a layin' on that plank with my broken leg danglin' in the water, an' all of a sudden — it was thunderin' an' lightnin' awful — the lightnin' struck that plank an' lit both ends of it, jumped over me, though it kind o' stunned me, an' when I come to, there I was a layin' on that burnin' plank in the middle o' the sea with a broken leg. The fire was a blazin' at both ends of the timber an' the water bein' so iley I dasent use it fer to put out the flames. I never was in such a fix before, an' I never want to be in another like it agin," said the old man, emptying his pipe and tapping the bowl on the fluke of the anchor. "I did n't get no prize money nuther, when I got back."

Fortunately for Rhodes, at this juncture the mellow tones of the bell forward striking eight times here interrupted the conversation, to the deep disappointment of the audience. The boatswain's mate aft on watch piped shrilly, crying a moment after in a deep hoarse voice in long drawn tones, —

"A . . . all, the port watch."

At this call, the lounging men sprang to their feet, those in the starboard watch immediately going be-

low to their hammocks to get the four hours of allotted rest, preparatory to their tour of duty, which began at midnight. The port watch, who were all on deck, stepped to their various stations and stood at attention answering their names as the roll was called by the midshipmen. The wheel and lookouts were relieved as soon as the watch was set. Among those to go below was old Rhodes, who belonged to the starboard watch. As he put his foot upon the ladder, his young friend William Cotton grasped him by the arm.

"You did n't tell us how you got away from that burnin' plank with your broken leg, Mister Rhodes. How was it, sir?"

"Too late to finish that yarn to-night, my boy; you must learn that a sailor's first duty when he 's got a watch below at night is to turn in an' enjoy it; so pipe yourself down, youngster, an' follow my example." All of which was very unsatisfactory indeed.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Why They Fought

AFT on the quarter-deck, the two girls were standing, surrounded by a group of officers. The heat of the day was now tempered by the cool breezes of the evening. The full moon was shining mystically over the long stretch of water, and in front of them, low in the heavens, hung the resplendent beauty of the Southern Cross, as the pitch of the ship from time to time brought it into view from aft.

The moonlight's magic touch heightened the beauty of the ship, the sails upon which it fell gleamed like frosted silver, though they cast black shadows across the white decks. The two girls had hitherto enjoyed the cruise extremely. They who speak of the monotony of a cruise have no eye for the ever varying food for the imagination presented by the changing sea. Margaret and Evelyn were both good sailors, and the pure air, unrestrained life, and regular hours had brought them both into perfect health. The gallant attentions of the young officers and the unusual situation in which they found themselves did not allow the minutes to hang heavily on their hands.

In the day time the rustle of silk and satin or the wave of the cool dainty muslins which Evelyn's

generously shared and most complete wardrobe gave them, seemed strangely incongruous as they brushed the massive guns, or were outlined against the black and rigid shrouds and stays; but when Night laid her soft hand upon the ship, the two women and their filmy draperies became fit and appropriate parts of the picture. Sometimes, as was the case this evening, they made a grand toilet, and appeared radiantly arrayed "to dazzle when the sun is down and rob the world of rest." Most of the officers who were unmarried, were frankly in love with one or the other of the two girls.

The recollection of the past upon Fairford's part, and his natural modesty and timidity with women, still kept up the bars between him and Margaret, indeed, that young lady made no effort to let them down. Now that they were together and there was no possibility of separation, she temporized with happiness, and day by day held off at arm's length the favorite of her heart; all of which was not discouraging to those who would fain break a lance in her behalf.

Those of the officers who were captivated by Evelyn's charming personality had become aware of her engagement to her kinsman, but that only added a zest to their endeavors, and they were by no means averse to cutting out the fair maiden in the nautical sense, and cutting out the English officer in a colloquial sense, if that were possible. Ludlow, the most seriously affected of them all, who had by no means given up his long love chase, had no advantage over the others, save that conferred by his previous acquaintance with the object of his adoration.

The officer of the deck was standing at the break of the poop carefully watching the ship, for Fairford allowed no negligence in attention to duties when he was aboard, no matter how pleasant the weather nor what assurance of safety it might give. The two girls and the others were standing as far aft as possible on the weather side of the poop. Fairford, in lonely magnificence, was pacing the lee side of the deck. The conversation had turned, as it frequently and naturally did, upon the war.

"I confess," said Evelyn, "that I never dreamed what a frightful thing war was until I came on this ship, and yet I cannot explain my ignorance."

"We are all equally blind to its dreadful reality till something brings it home to us, I think," said Margaret.

"Yes, I suppose so, but when I stood in the cabin below, the other day, and heard the sickening fall of that hateful whip on those poor men's shoulders, such a horror of it . . ."

"That was n't war," interrupted Ludlow, impetuously, "that was murder."

"Whatever it was," responded Evelyn, meaningly, flushing at his ungracious remark, "I am not responsible for it, and had it been possible, I would have stopped it at any cost."

"Forgive me," said Ludlow, contritely, "I spoke in haste, unthinkingly, as I should not have done."

"Women," continued Evelyn, "know nothing about these things, and indeed I think but few men realize them, else they would be more chary of entering upon combats themselves, or of forcing their countries into war."

"True," said Berry, the ex-captain of the privateer, "I have often observed that it is not the experienced soldier or sailor who brings nations into conflicts as a rule."

"Certainly not," said the junior lieutenant from the Constitution, "people who fight know what it is. It is the statesmen or the women who make the quarrels."

"Have you had much experience of it, Mr. Harris?" asked Margaret, looking into his youthful face.

"Not much, Miss Barrett; two frigate actions, a cutting out expedition, and some other little affairs."

"Mercy on me, and I took you for a baby!" she cried in surprise.

"I shall be most happy to have you take me on any terms," he said smiling, then added, "it is the statesmen or the women who make the quarrels."

"Not altogether," said Evelyn; "sometimes nations force them upon other nations."

"True in this instance, Evelyn," said Margaret.

"You know we had to fight or stand dishonored and discredited before humanity," said Ludlow. "Nations exist for the protection of their citizens, and the flag that flies up there at the gaff in the day time, which stands for our sovereignty, must protect us. You disregarded it, hence we fight."

"And can you find nothing to say for England, Mr. Ludlow, gentlemen?" cried Evelyn, standing her ground undaunted. "Here she has been fighting the battles of liberty for you and all mankind against the odious Buonaparte and all that he represents, and the country which should be her ally above

all others in her desperate straits comes down upon her back."

"If you had only asked of us our assistance," said Berry, "instead of demanding and enforcing your demands in the ruthless way you have done, disregarding the liberties of the individual so entirely, I am sure you might have had it."

"You have not learned in England that we are men of like passions here in America . . . " cried Harris.

"You mean here on this ship, don't you?" said Evelyn.

"That is one of the points of issue between us. This ship is America . . . whatever carries the flag is our country, and your people will have to learn that we can no more endure oppression than they can."

"You take a rude way of teaching us the lesson," said Evelyn, smiling.

"We do as we are done by, 't is the law of the world," said Berry again.

"But not God's law. I am sure that is something quite different," said the girl, gently.

"Granted, Miss Heathcote; but your country is the mother country. What kind of an example does she set her daughter?"

"Ay, Berry is right," said Egbert, the surgeon, "we are children of the same ideas and principles, heirs of the same heritage of free thought and free speech, and coercion is as great a failure with us as it has been with you, and so may it ever be."

"I admit all that," said Evelyn, reluctantly.

"That's because you have been with us, and know us better than the rest of your countrymen," said Ludlow.

"Do you justify the awful methods of punishment of which you have been a witness, Miss Heathcote?" asked Dr. Egbert.

"No woman could," answered Evelyn, promptly, "though the men who have charge of our affairs seem to think otherwise. Ah, gentlemen, I am only a woman, and I cannot argue with you, but I am an English woman, and glad am I to say it, and the flag you love is not my flag, the cause you espouse is not my cause, the hopes you cherish are far from mine. My country may be wrong, but it is my country still."

"Nobly said! Well done, Evelyn," cried Margaret, enthusiastically. "What think you of that, gentlemen all?"

"I grant that you have had some measure of success in your naval battles heretofore," continued Evelyn, smiling gratefully at Margaret, "and on this cruise as well; but, do you know I have my convictions, and one of them is that I shall end this cruise under the English flag."

She said it with such assurance, standing so proudly erect, her handsome head thrown back, that she looked the very image of Britannia herself, and the whole assemblage applauded.

"We are all captives of your prowess now, Miss Heathcote," said Berry.

"Almost you make me wish that I had been born an Englishman," said Ludlow.

"You will see, gentlemen, you will see, I feel it,

something tells me that I shall end this cruise as I say, under the English flag."

"I wonder what the captain would say to that," cried Margaret. "Blake," she called out imperiously, then realizing that this was not the way in which to address, in the hearing of his officers and men, the commander of the ship, who was pacing the deck in solitary grandeur wrapped in his own thoughts, she modulated her tone, saying, —

"Captain Fairford, come here, if you please, sir."

"At the service of the little boatswain's mate," answered Fairford, stepping across the deck and bowing low before her. "Ever since I was a boy I seem to have been under the dominion of old Rhodes, and I suppose that I shall continue to be subordinate to my petty officers until the end of my cruising."

"Do you call me a petty officer, Captain Fairford?" said Margaret, flushing.

"Did I say petty? I lost a letter, I meant a pretty officer."

"Did you make old Rhodes a boatswain's mate for his beauty then?" asked Margaret, pertly.

"Not I, he has n't enough for a Jack-of-the-dust. I gave him his position on account of his merits alone. If I were to rate you in accordance with the results of your ride and your heroic actions, Miss Barrett, you would be captain and I your lieutenant," he replied.

"We all waive any claims we may have to rank, if the ladies will take command," said Ludlow.

"Ay," said the surgeon, "let Miss Barrett be captain."

"Not I," said Margaret, "I am satisfied with my present station. The boatswain's mate is the most important man on the ship!"

"He thinks so at any rate," said the captain.

"Miss Heathcote, won't you take command then?" asked Berry.

"Gladly," answered Evelyn, promptly. "Mr. Officer of the deck, hoist my flag to the masthead, and sail this ship for England." The officer of the deck looked aft in surprise.

"We do not hoist a flag after dark; it 's not regulation," said Fairford, smiling, "and unfortunately the wind strictly prohibits our sailing for England at this time."

"Never mind," said Evelyn, laughing, "you will hoist it before you get through, or some one else will, and you will go to England too."

"Will you take us along in your train?" asked Harris. "Have pity on the poor prisoners of war?"

"Think what an imposing spectacle you would make with half a dozen prizes towing in your wake wherever you cruised on shore," said Ludlow.

"It would be stunning. I promise you I will do everything possible to lighten the tedium of your captivity."

"Only let us see you once a day, and we shall all be happy," said Berry.

"I certainly will, for you have all been so extremely kind to me that I scarcely know that I am a prisoner."

"You a prisoner!" cried Ludlow, and upon his setting the example, the whole group, except Margaret, bowed low before her.

"Behold us all captives to your bow and spear," said another.

"Ah, gentlemen, the bow and spear are obsolete weapons, and you are not as much my captives as I am yours."

"Would that you were ours!" said Fairford, gallantly, Margaret shooting a suspicious glance in his direction the while.

"What, captain, belong to all of you!" cried Evelyn, laughing.

"I called you over here," said Margaret, severely, to the captain, "to hear Evelyn's sentiments and anticipations and hopes, not to present to her a slave in chief, sir."

"Of course," said Fairford, abashed at this reproof, "all things are possible, especially on the sea; those hopes may be realized, but it will not be without a mighty struggle, I think, if I know the temper of the men of this ship as well as I do my own," he added.

"What are the men in such a particular temper about?" asked Evelyn.

"Madam," answered Fairford, gravely, "when we came aboard this ship, there was a dead body hanging at the yard-arm there; in a hammock in the sick bay, there was lying a thing — I cannot call it a man — with the mind and spirit beaten out of it. There he is now," he continued, as he recognized a hesitating figure slinking along the rail on the deck below him, for the poor sailor had been assigned to no duty and was practically allowed the run of the ship, forward.

"That man's back is a horror to look at," said Dr.

Egbert, quietly, "though it is now healed, and it will be so until a merciful God calls him away."

"Martin," called out the captain, "come up here."

The young man came up on the quarter-deck with halting step, and took off his hat, and stood before the group, nervously cringing and fawning.

"How do you feel to-night, my lad?" asked the captain, kindly.

"Very well, sir, thankee kindly," returned the poor demented man, starting back at the same moment as if to avoid a blow, and looking timidly at the captain. "The British were very kind to me, sir. I only got one hundred and fifty lashes and poor father got three hundred. I don't see him about here anywhere, sir. Is he with you, sir?"

"Would n't you like to fight the British for whipping you so?" asked Fairford.

"Fight 'em, sir? No, sir, they 'd lash me again," he cried in terror, dropping on his knees. "Oh, don't let 'em have me any more, sir! For God's sake keep me away from 'em. Don't let 'em take me again. Where 's my father?"

"But would n't you like to fight those who struck you?" said Fairford, insistently. At this question, his mood changing, the boy sprang to his feet and broke into wild laughter.

"They did n't strike me hard, sir, they only gave me one hundred and fifty lashes. Mercy, that 's what they called it, mercy! God have mercy! Does He have that kind, sir? No, I could n't fight 'em." He turned and darted down the ladder and ran forward, laughing wildly.

"That was a man once," said Fairford, quietly.

"The men knew him, they knew his father; that explains their temper. That 's why we fight."

"I must go to my cabin," said Evelyn, faintly, after a dreadful pause which no one broke. "I am but a woman, I cannot understand these things — poor man, poor man!" She turned to the ladder, attended by some of the officers. Margaret sprang to her side.

"Dearest, it was horrible," she said; "you are not responsible, we all know that."

"Good-night, Captain Fairford, good-night, gentlemen," said Evelyn to the officers. "Are you coming now, Margaret?"

CHAPTER XXXVII

Love on the Quarter-Deck

"PRESENTLY," said Margaret. "I wish to speak to Captain Fairford a moment."

The other officers at once stepped down upon the deck below, some of them going to their quarters, so that the after part of the ship was left to Margaret and the captain, with of course the officer of the watch forward out of earshot at the break of the poop to windward.

"Blake," she said sternly, "I wish to talk with you. How could you do such a dreadful thing? It was a shame to bring that man before her. She did n't whip him. She could n't help it. Oh! I hate war," she cried, throwing up her little hands as if to avert a blow, "when I think of the horror of it, the blood shed, the anguish and destruction, I —"

"Forget that you come of a race of soldiers, I presume," said Fairford, inwardly chafing under the censure, which he certainly deserved. "I am sorry I called him up, it was not premeditated, and I will tell your friend so to-morrow. But I confess when I look at that man, and think of other instances I have known, I almost lose control of myself."

"And that 's why I hate war, it makes men so ruthless and untender. I hate it, I do truly. What 's the good of it? At home we see only the glory of it,

the pomp and circumstance and all that. Only the men who are unharmed come back, and their bravery and the story of the fight is so fascinating, that the people with their shouts of victory drown the feeble cries of the wives and mothers and children of those who have not come back."

"In my heart of hearts, I hate it as much as you do, Margaret," he said gravely. "There is, of course, in every true man's heart the desire to bear himself bravely in the contest, to fight and win the battle, to uphold the cause to which his sense of duty pledges him; and at the actual moment of conflict I will confess that there is a mad joy in the mere fighting which takes possession of the souls of all men who are not cowards; but otherwise I detest it. I have stood upon too many blood-stained decks, I have had to tell too many wretched women that those for whom they were asking me would never return to them again, not to be willing to sacrifice everything but honor for peace, and yet war is my trade," he said, smiling sadly. After a brief pause he continued, —

"Somewhere on this wide ocean probably there is a ship commanded by my brother; he may be seeking me with deadly purpose, as I would assuredly have to seek him did I know of his whereabouts. When I was last at home, you remember hearing Bishop Meade preach a sermon on that Sunday we went to Church together, about the brotherhood of man, but it does not seem as if men could realize any general relationship between themselves unless the ties are actually those of blood. And yet I confess," he added, his face flashing with light, "as I have said, in the actual combat, these ethical considerations are

lost sight of. I fight from the sheer love of fighting, and strike because it is in me. Moments of repentance come after. You are a woman, and know not — "

"I can — I do," she interrupted, full of pride in her splendid lover; "that night I rode to the point, when I came to the bridge and saw those men and drove the spurs into Clifford, I forgot for the moment that I was a woman. I felt as we dashed upon the bridge that if the whole world stood in front of me I would have swept it aside, though now when I think of it, think that I — " her voice sank to an awe-struck whisper, "that I may have killed one of them, that that grief may have invaded some humble home with me for its source — I cannot bear to think of it." Her eyes filled with tears, and she put her hands up to her face. Fairford ventured to lay his hand gently upon her shoulder.

"Weep not, Margaret," he said tenderly, "it was for our country, for our cause you did it."

"I did not," she said sobbing, taken off her guard somewhat, "I did it for — "

"For what, Margaret?" he asked, bending eagerly forward.

"For fun," she answered lamely. She had almost betrayed herself. With quick alarm she hastened to recover her lost ground, and with a thrill almost of terror, she tried to hold back a renewal of the appeal which she saw was trembling on his lips.

"Oh, Margaret," he said, "can it be that you rode for us — for me — ?"

"Not at all, certainly not," she answered promptly. "I went because father said I might, and I wished to

take a ride, and then Clifford had not been out for so long — "

"A ride that black night! Margaret . . . Margaret," he said, smiling joyously.

"Why not, sir? I like to ride in the night," she answered boldly and ingenuously.

"That's nonsense, my dear. Admit that you did it for . . ."

"Nonsense, is it? I was just about to . . . oh, you can be so hateful, I'd never do it again, never! I would not ride across the street for you at noon-day now," she answered crossly.

"Tell me, Margaret," he said, seizing her hand and dropping the unprofitable subject, the practically admitted cause of the ride setting his pulses bounding, "are you — did you — did you ever love Dick?"

"Love him? Certainly I did."

He dropped her hand as if it had stung him, his feelings tumbling toward the zero mark at the same time. But he was so madly in love with the small bundle of contradictions and inconsistencies standing so imperiously before him, that he could contain himself no longer. He must have it out again.

"You were not engaged to him, were you?"

"No, I was not," she answered; "he" speaking reluctantly, "was engaged to Evelyn . . ."

With a sigh of relief, Fairford ejaculated,—

"Oh, you loved him as a sister then?"

"Not at all, sir. I love you as a sister, and it s not the same thing, I assure you." She was bent on humiliating him then — she always was, he thought — well, he would show her the victim was ready.

"Is n't it? I am glad of it. I want to be loved in a unique way, not as other men are, or not at all."

"Well, you are then, or rather you are not loved at all, so you have your desire," she replied most untruthfully, making a move to leave him; but he would not be denied, so he made the plunge.

"Only hear me a moment before you go, I beg of you. The pent up feelings of the years which have passed since I saw you overwhelm me. Though my fate tremble upon your answer, I needs must have it. Nay, only listen, there is stimulus enough in your very presence. As you stand there beautiful in the moonlight, so you have stood by me in many a night watch, so you have visited me in dreams of hope and happiness and love.

"No needle ever turned to its pole with the fidelity and persistency with which my heart fixes itself upon you. And when I see you after all you have done for us, for the ship, for me . . . why, this ship is yours by right of conquest, as we are yours as well, when I think that the airy substance of my vision is here embodied before me, that I have but to take a step forward to touch you . . . "

He suited his actions to the words of his low impassioned whisper, he seized her trembling hands; they stood in the deep shadow of the sail, his arm stole around her waist. He was so strong and so handsome towering there above her, his voice was vibrant with his feelings, she could almost hear his heart beat as he drew her to him. Where was her reserve, her maidenly hesitation? — like a charmed bird she found herself inadequate for resistance. The gentle pitch of the ship swinging to and fro, the soft sigh of the

breeze, the splash of breaking waves about the bow, his words with their thrilling passionate cadence — all added to the glamour of the moment. Another moment, and it would all be over. Terrified at his own daring, he hesitated — it was fatal to his hopes. Why did n't he go on, how could he be so foolish as to stop then? she thought. It is not only the woman who hesitates who is lost.

"Margaret," he whispered, "dearest, speak to me."

She did not wish to speak herself, but rather to hear his own voice telling the delicious tale again, and so she lingered in expectant silence, making no answer. Suddenly he dropped her hand, and released her waist.

"Very well, then. I understand your silence," he said sadly, having missed his fate because he had failed to put it to the final touch.

She actually laughed at him. There was bitterness and scorn in that musical laugh, but he did not read it.

"When you next cut out a ship, or a woman, Blake, do it more boldly," she said.

"Margaret, do you mean . . . "

"I mean nothing more, the hour is late, I must go. Meanwhile consult some of your officers and learn of them how . . . "

"Margaret, I wish," he said, "that you had some flowers now, that I might beg again for the rose of reconciliation which I refused. What a fool I was."

"You would n't get it," answered Margaret, proudly, though at that very moment folded in the least brotherly of his letters, it lay against her heart. "I do not proffer my favors a second time to any one,

sir. Dick would have taken it, I am sure, though he already had one I gave him." Her answer stung him.

"Possibly Evelyn would have given one to me if I had asked her," he said with rising spirit.

"No doubt," said Margaret; "you would better go below and ask her now. It will be a good thing for you, Captain Fairford, to have a friend at court when your old ship is captured, as she says it will be. I wish I had never lighted that light, and lost poor Clifford. He never crossed me nor flirted with any one else, he always loved me, and I liked him better than the whole ship and you too," she went on viciously. "No, don't touch me. I am going to my cabin, sir."

He still detained her, determined not to lose his rare opportunity.

"Margaret, don't speak so to me. You must know how devotedly I love you. You simply drive me mad flirting so outrageously with those young dandies . . . "

"Is this the discourteous manner in which you refer to the officers you have the honor to command, sir?"

"Oh, they are good enough as officers . . . "

"They are excellent as lovers as well," answered Margaret. "I am quite satisfied with them, and I can speak with authority, I assure you, sir."

"Will you never hear reason? . . . "

"Is it speaking to me now?"

"How ridiculous," he went on, "to be thus thwarted upon my own quarter-deck by such a chit of a girl."

" Chit of a girl ! " said Margaret, opening her eyes to their fullest extent, and stamping her foot in anger, " I 'd have you to know, Captain Fairford . . . stand aside, sir," and she swept past him head in air, and descended to her cabin. Oh, Margaret, Margaret, rare, pale Margaret, what a different story could your little throbbing heart have told had it spoken truly !

CHAPTER XXXVIII

His Brother's Ship

THE squall on the quarter-deck of the evening before was but a precursor of bad weather outside, for the next morning the Narragansett ran into a succession of heavy easterly gales, which severely tried the endurance of the new and unsettled ship. She was carefully watched, however, by the officers, and everything having been made snug and secure, she labored and pitched along toward the south under her three topsails close reefed and the forestaysail.

It was a dreary, miserable period for the two girls, who passed most of their time shut up in their cabins. The driving rain and the sheets of spray cut up by the wind, rendered it very unpleasant for them to stay on deck, and the pitching and rolling of the ship made it impossible for them to keep their footing when they did go there. The possible contingencies which might arise, and the arduous duties and increased watchfulness demanded by the situation, kept all the officers, from the captain down, fully occupied, and in a state of extreme tension.

The gale, instead of abating, after two days blew so hard that the limited canvas was further reduced, and under a close reefed maintopsail and storm staysail, the good ship plunged along to the southward. If

it blew any stronger, they would be compelled to lie to, and wait until the storm broke.

Since the day of the last quarrel, Fairford's intercourse with Margaret had been of the most formal and ceremonious character. When the two girls and he met together in his cabin, naturally he devoted himself more particularly to Evelyn than to Margaret, and although the latter was perfectly aware that she possessed all of Fairford's heart, with a delightful inconsistency she resented even his passing attentions to her English friend; attentions, by the way, which filled Ludlow with jealousy and anxiety, and caused that erstwhile cheerful and gallant young officer to look upon life from a very gloomy point of view. Evelyn had no intention whatever of rewarding in any way the obstinate desire of Ludlow; *au fond*, her heart was true to Heathcote, but Heathcote was far away, and she had become habituated to the attentions of Ludlow, and looking upon him as her exclusive property, had unconsciously given him ground for hope.

Had Heathcote been out of the running, Ludlow would undoubtedly have captured the prize. He realized this acutely, and hoping something would turn up in his favor, continued the pursuit and chafed bitterly at his captain's devotion to Evelyn. Ludlow's attention was so humble and so persistent, and in spite of the constant rebuffs which he received, he was so cheerful and jolly and appeared so confident of ultimate success generally, that Evelyn was quite willing to receive Fairford's attentions, to show Master Ludlow that she was by no means his captive. She was devoted to Margaret, but it was not in human

nature not to enjoy the situation, so the little party played at cross purposes again, with everybody desperately unhappy except Evelyn.

On the morning of the third day after the storm began, the wind shifted and gradually fell during the night, and the weather moderated sufficiently to allow the ship to be laid on her course again on the starboard tack. It was still blowing a heavy gale but the fiercest period of the storm was over. The two girls, after a cold breakfast had been served them, it having been impossible to light the galley fires, had taken advantage of the slight lull to come up on deck. Wrapped in stout boat cloaks with snug hoods upon their heads, they were safely ensconced in a sheltered nook in the lee of the bulwarks on the quarter-deck, and in front of the break of the poop.

Happiness was in Ludlow's heart, for he stood near Evelyn. The frightful pitching of the ship rendered locomotion difficult to anyone, and to the inexperienced impossible, so she was forced to remain where he placed her, and from time to time to cling to him for support, to prevent being rolled headlong upon the deck, or pitched into the sea, which meant certain death. Margaret, in default of the captain, who was gloomily regarding the ocean from the weather side of the poop above them, was forced to put up with the attention of Mr. Berry, finding that gallant gentleman a very poor substitute indeed for her lover. She was thoroughly repentant now for her treatment of him a few days since, and longed to hear again his impassioned protestations. She had made several timid overtures which had met with no response from the incensed captain.

That very morning, as they had come through the cabin door, she had looked up at him looking down upon them from above, and by a glance and a gesture had invited him to become her protector in the storm, an invitation which had been promptly refused on the plea of the exigency of duties connected with the ship. She did not like to be crossed in her wishes any more than any other woman would, and her present feelings were divided between a burning indignation at his rather curt refusal to pay any attention whatever to her suggestion, and a longing desire, as she phrased it in her mind, to be friends again — though friends was hardly the proper term.

The rain had ceased, but the day had broken gloomy and foreboding. Gray, heavy-laden clouds hung low over the heavens, while beneath them, lighter mists went scurrying along in ghostlike masses under the drive of the fierce wind. They were far south of the tropics now, and had been driven far to the westward of their course by the storm they had encountered, and as it was the month of November the damp weather had a chill bite to it which defied their heaviest wrappings.

No lookouts were aloft in such weather, and therefore an approaching sail was not detected as soon as it would have been under ordinary circumstances, and no notice was taken of it until it was sighted simultaneously by half a dozen men upon deck in different parts of the ship. The cry "Sail ho!" mingled with the screaming wind apparently from every direction. When it was borne into the minds of the two maidens on the quarter-deck that a sail had been sighted, nothing would do but that they must be

taken to the poop-deck, which was higher and not surrounded by immense bulwarks which towered above their heads in their present position, shutting off all observation.

Not a sail had been seen for weeks, and they had been sailing for many days through a lonely and unfrequented part of the ocean, through which, by the way, one of the most memorable cruises of all history had been made, the desperate voyage of Vespucci and his companions three hundred years before to the desolate island of South Georgia. When they struggled up the ladders, assisted by the officers, and reached the open deck, they were almost swept from their feet by the unbroken force of the cold and cutting wind.

A place to stand, of course unsheltered, was soon found for them on the weather side of the deck, and a few turns of a rope cast off from the pin rail, secured them tightly to the mizzen shrouds standing out rigid and taut like great iron bars under the tremendous pressure of the wind upon the topsail. Fairford had slowly and carefully mounted to the rail and stood with his arm clasped around the shrouds, looking out at the sail to leeward. Ludlow and Berry were still attendant upon the two girls.

"I see her now," suddenly cried Margaret, blinking in the wind and clinging to Berry in spite of the lashing. "What a little ship!"

"Where?" asked Evelyn.

"Off here."

"Oh, of course, I see it now. Is n't it tiny?"

"That 's a great ship, Miss Heathcote," said Ludlow, still holding her firmly by the arm.

"Yes," added Berry, "a very heavy frigate I should say." The conversation was carried on under difficulties; they were almost required to shout at each other on account of the noise of the storm.

"A ship-of-the-line," roared Fairford, bending down toward them, after taking a long look through the glass. In a short time it was seen that the captain's surmise was correct. The approaching vessel was a very large ship with the same sail set as their own, and with the wind on the quarter going free. She was followed at different intervals by a second, then a third ship, and then as the day wore on, the Narragansett sailing parallel to, though in a different direction from the other ships, brought into view in succession a small fleet or squadron of seven heavy ships-of-the-line, three frigates and a brig. When she came abreast of the rear of the line the van was far ahead.

The ships were beautifully handled, and in spite of the severe weather had kept their places with remarkable accuracy. The tall sides of the great fabrics which showed the glistening copper with which their bottoms were sheathed every time they rolled, the muzzles of the heavy guns which protruded from the tightly closed ports in long menacing rows, the lofty sweeping spars, the wide-reaching yard-arms, the water which broke and bubbled and seethed about their bluff bows, as they smashed into the waves, or the glint of the light upon the foamy crests, as they rushed through them, followed by the smaller frigates and the little brig which rode buoyantly in the rear of the fleet, and to leeward of the last and heaviest battleship, made a sea picture of

"A SHIP-OF-THE-LINE," ROARED FAIRFORD, TAKING A LOOK THROUGH THE GLASS.—*Page* 280.

impressiveness and power only surpassed by the consciousness on the part of the observant Americans, that after all these huge constructions of men passing by them in this great ocean review, were but playthings in the hand of the wind and sea.

The Narragansett, changing her course slightly after having brought the leading ships well astern, was slowly swinging in toward the rear of the fleet. Fairford had of course seen the futility of sending the crew to quarters and the ship presented her usual appearance save that everybody was on deck. The forecastle was crowded with observers, and every point of vantage occupied by the eager watchers.

"What ships are those?" screamed Evelyn in Ludlow's attentive ear.

"An English fleet, probably homeward bound from the Cape of Good Hope, and blown far out of their course by the easterly gales," answered Ludlow.

"How splendid is the sight," cried Evelyn, triumphantly. "You will of course surrender now. What can this puny ship do against yon mighty fleet? I shall go back home under the English flag."

"Blake, do you hear that?" cried Margaret, fiercely, as he sprang down upon the deck beside her, "why do you not send the men to the guns? Are you going to be taken without a shot?" She stamped her foot with all the pride of race and nation.

"Resistance would be futile if it were possible," cried Fairford, "but under these circumstances, force is not necessary. No battle can be fought in such a sea. The only gun which could reach us would be from the main deck battery of the liners, and to open a port now upon one of those ships would be to sink

her. The little passions of man must be held in abeyance on the great deep this morning; a Higher Power rules."

The little party had drifted over to the lee side, the other ships now being in plain view from any point, and conversation was not so difficult.

"They are too far away for the carronades to be of any value, and musket and rifle shots would be useless and wanton. If they killed any one I would call it murder," said Ludlow.

"I shall be very much mistaken, however, if we do not get a fight out of some one of them in the end, when the storm has somewhat abated," said Berry, eagerly.

"At any rate it won't be because I did not give them an opportunity," cried Fairford. "What a splendid picture of power they make, not a single flag flying either. Quarter-master," he continued, "show a flag aloft there."

In obedience to his orders, a small storm flag was soon whipping and flapping from the gaff end, which was immediately responded to by the red flag of England from a similar spar upon the last and largest ship-of-the-line. Simultaneously, the three frigates to leeward hoisted their colors. The Narragansett was not more than a thousand yards distant from the nearest English ship, the officers upon her quarter-deck being plainly visible through the glass.

Among the belongings of Captain Cunningham when the Narragansett was cut out, had been the official British signal book and Navy list, with the numbers of the different ships, each one being distinguished by her own allotted number. As soon as

they had flown their flags each one of the three frigates hoisted a set of signals. Sending a midshipman below to his cabin for the signal book, Fairford easily made the numbers, seven ninety three. Turning to the book, "The enemy," he read aloud to the interested group on the deck, "may I pursue?"

"Ah, they are signalling for permission to chase," said Ludlow to those at his side.

"They will find that we are not very good at running away, sir," replied Berry, confidently, "unless the whole fleet takes a hand in the pursuit."

"Quite so," said Ludlow, "though I am afraid when we get the captured English officers on board, Miss Heathcote will forget us."

"I would n't worry about that just at present, if I were you," said Evelyn. "I see no prospect of your getting away though."

"If you get captured, Blake," said Margaret, "I 'll never . . ."

"Never what?"

"I 'll never save another ship for you," she replied.

"This one is enough, thank you, but nobody is captured yet or likely to be to-day at any rate. Ah, there go the answering signals from the flagship. Let me see, the distinguishing pennant and some more numbers. That 'll be a ship's number, we 'll see who is to chase us now. Two fifty four. We 'll have a fight surely. The flagship has signalled one of the frigates to chase us."

"Which one?" cried Margaret, impulsively.

"I am looking for it now in the list . . . ah, here it is now. . . . I have it . . . two fifty two, three,—

no, the next page." As he turned the leaf, the book fell from his hand when he read the name of the ship that was to pursue him, for after the number was printed the name of the frigate Undaunted, 36, Captain Richard Heathcote.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Off Tristan da Cunha

THE broad expanse of the Atlantic Ocean on the thirty-seventh parallel of South latitude, from the point where its eastern waves roll over Africa's burning sands or lie tangent to the Cape of Good Hope, to that far quarter of the globe where its western surf beats on Patagonia's desolate shore, is broken in but one solitary point. In latitude 37° 31′ South, longitude 12° 18′ West, the Island of Tristan da Cunha, with its two small companions, boldly thrusts its rocky head out of the foaming surge, eight thousand feet in the air.

The great waves of the mighty deep strike madly upon the sub-oceanic mountain range of which the island is a crest, and after a thousand leagues of conquest, dash themselves into mist and foam in eternal onset upon its shores. The osprey, the wild sea-bird, alone of things that have life, builds a nest upon its rocky crags, and its grim recesses re-echo to no living voice but the wild cries of these denizens of the air.

Lonely and forbidding, and in those days uninhabited, the bleaching bones of many a tall ship told the tale of those dangerous needles of the sea. Under the lee of the tremendous cliffs of the island, two brave ships, small in comparison to its huge bulk, were

about to engage in mortal combat. For two days these two vessels had been sailing southward side by side, their crews impatiently waiting for the hand of God to stay the fury of the storm, that they might give vent to the pent up passions within their bosoms.

The shifting wind had given to the vessel which flew the starry flag, the advantage of the weather-gage. Each ship had reduced its canvas to the three topsails and jib, and this was the sail they had elected to fight under. The sea was still so high that the muzzles of the guns in the main batteries of the two frigates dipped in the water with every roll. It had been dangerous to have opened the closed ports, but here in the lee of the island, somewhat sheltered from the brunt of the wind's attack, the ships were much more steady, indeed, for this reason alone the two naval commanders had welcomed their dangerous proximity to the bold shore, and since early morning revealed the island before them, had been rushing headlong for their present position.

Two days had given ample time to make every provision dictated by skill and experience for the coming conflict, and the ships had been deliberately stripped and prepared for action, and all were eagerly waiting the expected shock of battle. Fairford had been filled with gloomy sadness and foreboding at the thought of the cruel fate which compelled him to engage with his brother's ship, though he neglected no necessary precaution upon that account; indeed, knowing the quality of the man with whom he had to deal, rather the reverse. Evelyn, while confident of the success of the English ship under her lover's command in the approaching con-

flict, was yet unable entirely to control her anxiety lest some mishap should bring death upon him. Margaret prayed constantly for Fairford's safety, and went about softly, timidly seeking reconciliation, but in vain. Ludlow was consumed with jealousy at the near presence of his real rival, and highly resolved that no one should be before him in case the two ships came together and gave opportunity for boarding. The spirit of the crew was excellent.

Not less prepared and ready was the Undaunted, not less sanguine and confident her officers, not less willing and impatient her crew. Heathcote had indeed taken a leaf out of America's book, and care in selection and persistency in drill had given him a body of men to command inferior to none on the ocean. He would show the enemy that his ship was not the Guerrière, nor the Java, nor the Macedonian; he would duplicate, nay surpass, the work of the bold Shannon, when she captured the unlucky Chesapeake.

So the captain of one ship grimly trained his guns upon his brother, and the captain of the other prepared to pour his torrent of destruction upon his love, all unwitting. What justification under the gray angry heaven was there for a situation like to this? Duty, Honor, Country — are they but catch words after all, which we invoke when blind Fate arrays the one man against the other for her own amusement and then calls the game she plays with Death with feeble fatuous men for counters, war? Or do they have a meaning before which even love itself must bow?

In running for the island, the Narragansett, on account of her superior speed, gained a slight advan-

tage over her rival and was somewhat in the lead of the Undaunted. Both vessels were of the same size and armament, the English having a slightly larger crew. Each was armed with long eighteens and thirty-two pound carronades. Suddenly, as they came under the lee of the cliffs, the Englishman set his foresail in order to close upon the American holding steadily ahead of him, and at the same instant, a long tongue of flame shot out from the bow-chaser on the English ship and a heavy shot rushed through the air from the Undaunted toward its mark.

As the smoke cleared away, a cloud of splinters flying on the Narragansett showed that the well-aimed shot had reached its destination. Captain Fairford, who, in his eagerness to reach comparatively smooth water for the action, had run too close to the shore in these unknown waters, unfortunately found himself in a sort of channel or pass, and not liking the look of the water foaming over a possible reef off to port, was forced to hold on as he was for a short period, until he reached a position in a small bay where he could safely clear the reef abreast of him and wear ship off shore.

He had not a single gun with which to reply, and bore the attack in grim silence.

Six times the long gun forward on the English ship sent its deadly messenger of destruction into the American ship. The gun practice, contrary to custom of the English, was excellent, the after part of the hull had been severely pounded and a half dozen men at least had been killed or wounded. Controlling his own impatience, and restraining and

calming the crew, he waited until his ship at last cleared the threatening reefs. Then he put his helm hard up and ran off before the wind, and the gallant Englishman, who had not yet reached the reef, immediately did the same, to prevent being raked.

As the two ships, beautifully handled, came around smartly together and ran off side by side and close to each other, they began firing again, and soon all hands were smartly engaged. The deep roar of the great guns mingled with the sharper detonation of the heavy carronades, as they screamed to and fro upon their slides. The rolling and pitching of the ships would have made accurate aim impossible with a less trained crew, but the drill by which each had developed his men showed its value now.

Great rapidity of action being impossible, they fired coolly and with the utmost deliberation. In accordance with Fairford's direction, his men waited upon the crest of a wave until their ship began to roll toward the opposing ship before they delivered their fire upon the foeman, whom they soon found to be in every way worthy of their steel. They had been trained in as good a school as their American brethren, and their firing was equally as deliberate and as accurate, but the two commanders had chosen different tactics, the English firing from the crest of the wave like the others but as their vessel was rolling away from their enemy.

It was a decision which finally cost Heathcote his life and his ship, though the startling effects of this upward tendency in his fire were at once apparent, for most of the shrouds, braces and ropes on the engaged side of the Narragansett were cut to pieces;

the mizzentopmast crashed over forward and to starboard and fell upon the starboard bulwarks, dismantling some of the guns in the starboard battery, and killing some of the men before it could be cut adrift. A half an hour after the first exchange of broadsides, the lee maintopsail sheet was also cut by a shot and the sail went adrift, and aided by several rents, tore itself from the bolt ropes and flapped to pieces in the fierce gale. Deprived of all her after sail, the Narragansett slowly swung off toward her antagonist.

The two ships had drifted very near to each other prior to this moment, and the watchful Americans were painfully impressed by the fact that to outward appearances the English ship seemed to be practically unharmed. Aloft, all her spars were still standing and no sail lost with the exception of the jib, the stay of which had been cut by a shot; the jib halyards also had been carried away, and the sail dragged in the water ahead; this was a serious matter, however, as the wind on the after sails forced the Undaunted's bow up toward the American, and the two ships came together with a terrific crash, the broadside of the Narragansett lying square across the bow of the English ship with every gun bearing.

Eager hands had thrown the grapnels and lashed the two ships tightly together. A raking broadside delivered at this short range, the two vessels being in actual contact, had literally torn the insides out of the English ship. Fortunately for the English, just before the moment of impact, seeing a collision inevitable, Heathcote had called all hands to the forecastle to board, and as his lower decks had been somewhat cleared, the result of the frightful raking at short

range had not been as severe as the situation warranted.

But his ship was in a dreadful condition, the superiority of Fairford's tactics being now apparent. Neglecting the upper works, which still showed fair, his batteries had devoted themselves strictly to the hull of the doomed frigate. Her decks were covered with dead and dying men, her guns were dismounted and dismantled on every side; wounded in her very vitals, the ship was making water fast. The foretopmast of the Englishman at this moment came down with a mighty crash. Falling forward and to starboard, and striking the American ship on the quarter, for the two ships had swung sidewise near together again, it made an effective bridge from one to the other. Additional lashings at once bound them more closely to each other, and they lay rolling and crashing and grinding against each other like two mighty wrestlers in some death grapple on the deep.

Fortunately for this development of the contest, the loss among the Americans had not been as severe heretofore as among the English, though still serious, most of the Undaunted's shots taking effect in the rigging as had been intended. Heathcote had fought his ship with the utmost gallantry and resolution, and had reduced the upper works of the American until he was almost a perfect wreck aloft, but the terrific pounding he had received in his own hull had diminished further his power of defence, although with the exception of the lost foretopmast, the jib and some other slight injuries aloft, his own ship seemed to be in much the better condition.

The condition of his ship resolved him to risk all in a desperate attempt to carry the Narragansett by boarding, a favorite and usually successful attempt on the part of English ships. When the foremast of the Undaunted fell over, bridging the distance between the two ships, all hands on the Narragansett were called away to repel boarders, first having got in a second raking broadside to which no reply was made, and which absolutely let the daylight through the English ship and completed her destruction below.

As the men came swarming up from below on the Narragansett, rushing aft to the quarter-deck and the lee gangway, the rail of the English ship was suddenly covered with men handling their cutlasses and pikes and firing their pistols. A tall slender figure sprang upon the wrecked foremast, cheering his men and waving his sword. At this instant, a volley from the marines who had been crouching behind the rail and holding their fire, swept away the British who had sprung toward them. The youthful figure upon the heel of the foremast wavered in the air and staggered, clapped his hand to his breast and fell back upon his own deck, but not before Fairford, with a thrill of horror lost in an instant in the stress of the conflict, had recognized his brother.

"Stand by!" he shouted from the poop-deck in a voice of thunder.

The Narragansett's men instinctively tightened their grasp upon their swords or their pistols, or shortened their hold on the pikes in their hands in preparation for close action.

"Board!" he cried, and leaping upon the English-

man's prostrate foremast, followed by the seamen, ran rapidly across the bridge so formed, in spite of a wavering discharge of small arms which struck down the man behind him. Meanwhile from the gangway, old Rhodes made a leap for the bow of the English ship towering above him. Catching the rail with his hands he drew himself slowly up, when he was violently pulled down from behind. He struggled a moment vainly, lost his balance and fell back upon the deck, cursing and swearing profanely the while and narrowly avoiding crushing to death Master William Cotton. That ambitious youth, despairing of any other way of boarding the enemy, had endeavored to swarm up the leg of the boatswain's mate by clinging to him in this unceremonious manner. Leaping to his feet at once, and promising Master William a rope's ending later, the old man, as there was no time for argument, seized the boy, who was armed with an enormous cutlass many sizes too big for him, by the jacket, pitched him up on the rail, and with another spring landed on the forecastle himself.

At the beginning of the fight young Martin at the sound of the first gun had come on deck in great excitement, and at the moment of impact seized the cutlass of a dead sailor and springing on the bowsprit of the Undaunted, projecting over the deck, had followed Ludlow and Berry and other officers and men, and charged boldly down upon the dauntless Englishmen on the forecastle with a courage and desperation which betokened a returning intelligence and a recollection of his wrongs. These overwhelming attacks, so gallantly made, were as gallantly met, though on

account of their losses the English were fewer in number than their assailants.

The English captain, gasping from a bullet wound in the breast, lay in a pool of blood on the forecastle, propped up against the heel of the bowsprit, both his legs having been broken by a grape shot. In his hands were his pistols, and three or four more which had been hastily collected lay by his side. With superhuman resolution, he still cheered on his brave men in the hand-to-hand conflict ensuing. A gigantic Englishman with a swinging stroke of his cutlass cut down old Bill Thompson as he came springing along the mast, and he was in turn instantly impaled upon Fairford's sword. A bullet from Heathcote's pistol struck the unfortunate Ludlow fairly in the heart and he instantly pitched forward head foremost and fell dead upon the deck of his mortal enemy. Then the rest of that party, now led by Berry, struck the English crowded on the forecastle and fighting desperately at the foretopmast, in the flank, and they were forced to give back a little.

There was no space for pistol shooting now, and the men in the tops could not fire into the tangled mass on the forecastle of the Undaunted, so cutlass gritted against cutlass, and steel rained blows upon steel. The men fought without cheering, deep breathings and groanings and muttered oaths taking the place, with now and then a shriek of agony. Old Rhodes soon cleared a space in front of him by the skilful use of his cutlass and the powerful sweep of his mighty arm. Into this space little Cotton rashly darted, and followed impetuously by young Martin, leaped toward Heathcote. The two men between

Heathcote and the approaching Americans were cut down by Berry and Rhodes respectively, but not until one of them had nicked the life out of the small William with his cutlass. Samuel Martin, though wounded by a stray bullet, sprang over the little boy's body into the open space and raised his cutlass to drive it through the body of the prostrate English captain. The last bullet from Heathcote's last pistol sent the young man to join his father. As Rhodes leaped toward the Englishman with lifted cutlass, with a feeble voice he said faintly, —

"Drive it home, my man, I'm done for."

CHAPTER XL

United and Divided

THE English, fewer in numbers than the Americans, had been forced to retreat in every direction. They had no thought of surrendering, however, and, disdaining quarter, they were gradually driven up against the lee rail, where they fought until they were cut down to a man. Fairford, powder stained and dirty, with torn clothing and with blood streaming down his face from a wound which had cut his forehead so that a piece of skin fell down over his eye, nearly blinding him, staggered over to where Heathcote lay dying, his head supported by one of the American sailors by Rhodes's direction.

"Great God! Blake, was it your ship?" murmured the astonished and dying Englishman, "I might have suspected from the fight you were putting up that it was one of the family. You have won again . . . too bad . . . but you are a wreck aloft as I am below," he said feebly.

"Run over to the Narragansett for a surgeon's mate, some one. Bear a hand for God's sake," cried Fairford, in great agony of mind.

"Never mind the doctor, Blake. I've got it in both legs, and I've got it in the breast. Tell Evelyn . . ." he murmured.

"Can nothing be done, Dick?" said Fairford, sweeping the blood from his face with his hands and tying a handkerchief about his head.

"Nothing," said the latter, opening his eyes wearily. "I am gone . . . good-bye, Blake . . . the game is up . . . you have won . . . where's mother . . . tell Eve . . . What's that, a vision?" he almost shrieked, with a sudden accession of strength, lifting his head from the Narragansett man's arms, as a woman stepped upon the deck of the Undaunted, looking wildly about her. Her glance fell first upon the body of a man lying face upward at her feet, his left hand pressed upon his heart, his right hand still holding his sword. It was Ludlow. He had met death as he had faced life . . . with a smiling face. A wave of pity swept over her as she realized who lay before her, and then her searching eye fell upon the little group forward. With a wild scream she sprang toward them.

"Is it a vision?" asked Heathcote, faintly.

"No, it is I, in flesh and blood, come to save you, my love, my king," she whispered, falling upon her knees and relieving the sailor holding her lover's head. "Where are you wounded? Where do you suffer?"

"Nowhere, since you are here, sweetheart," he whispered, smiling.

"A surgeon," she cried to Fairford, as she noticed Heathcote's deadly pallor, "for God's sake, quick!"

"I will see to it at once," answered the American, weakly, rising to his feet and staggering back toward his own ship, faint from loss of blood.

In the forecastle of the Narragansett, whither he had

been carried by his shipmates, lay old Bill Thompson, dying. Master Joseph Rhodes, his whilom antagonist and devoted friend, who had come unharmed through the fight, was kneeling beside him. In his last moments he opened his eyes slowly and recognized the boatswain's mate. His lips moved, and the old seaman bent down to listen.

"I guess," said the dying sailor, feebly, "that maybe I'd 'a' done better . . . if I'd 'a' believed that there yarn . . . about Jones," and then the voice of the poor sceptic was stilled forever. To believe or not to believe in Jonah, that was his theology.

"I wonder if that confession come too late?" muttered old Rhodes, brushing away a rare tear with the back of his hard hand.

The English ship, which was clear above, was a wreck below. When the men on the forecastle had been beaten by the Americans, opposition had ceased because there were none left to carry it on. A grim blood-stained veteran stood alone at the wheel, one or two others still unwounded had thrown down their arms. The marines and others in the tops had of course surrendered.

The broken and battered deck and hull in which apparently every shot from the Narragansett's heavy batteries had taken effect, looked like a slaughter house. Below in the cockpit, the surgeon killed by a stray shot — in one of the rakings — had fallen dead upon the body of the man upon whom he had been operating, who had quietly bled to death under his dead hand. The ship had been literally beaten to pieces. At the close range, the shot from the carronades went smashing through her, fairly crushing

everything before them. Grape from the long guns and solid shot as well, and the two raking broadsides she had received had demolished everything between decks. Everything was wet with blood, cumbered with dead and wounded of both crews, from the hand-to-hand fighting. All were shrieking, praying, cursing or groaning, as they rolled to and fro on the unsteady ship.

A few seconds after Fairford had dropped back upon his own deck, followed by most of his men, the lashings, already strained, carried away suddenly, under the rolling of the two ships in the tremendous seas, and the inert English vessel drifted heavily away. Before Fairford could summon his own surgeon the two ships had parted. His wound dazed him somewhat, and as he stood stupidly looking at the English ship drifting away and plainly sinking, he forgot for the moment his errand. A cry of anguish close beside him recalled him to himself.

"Blake, Blake," shrieked a terrified voice at his elbow at the sight of his blood-stained, powder-blackened face, "you are wounded . . . killed . . . God have mercy!"

It was Margaret, who had come below when Evelyn, wild with anxiety, had done so as the roar of the cannonade had died away. The two girls had learned from the wounded and captured English seamen when they reached the deck, that the prize really was the Undaunted, commanded by Heathcote, confirming their fears. Evelyn had torn herself from Margaret's restraining hand, and had leaped aboard. Margaret was at the moment endeavoring to follow her, when she was confronted by her lover.

"He's gone," said Fairford, wildly, putting his hand to his head; "it's Dick's ship I have captured, and we have killed him. Poor mother," he muttered, leaning against the main fife-rail.

"Yes, yes, of course," said Margaret, eagerly, "but you, Blake, tell me of yourself, you are wounded?" At this moment Fairford came to himself again. In that scene of blood, of death, of ruin, of despair, he saw only this woman.

"Do you care if I live or die?" he cried, turning to her.

"Care?" she cried, fearlessly looking him in the face, "oh, blind and foolish, do you not see that I love you?"

"Thank God!" he sobbed, impulsively catching her hand, careless of who might see. "It's the second victory of the morning, and the better."

"Look to the English ship, sir," said Rhodes at this moment, "she's sinking, and there's a woman on board her."

"Good God!" said Fairford, while Margaret screamed, —

"Evelyn, Evelyn. You must get her off."

"Mr. Berry," said the captain to that officer, "I do not see Mr. Ludlow. Make what sail you can and close with the prize. Quick, for your lives, men. There's a woman on board her."

As the unwounded seamen of the Narragansett sprang into the remnants of the rigging, the helm was shifted and the vessel slowly started toward her beaten antagonist. In the first of the hurry and confusion after the battle, though the ship had been surrendered, the English flag had not been hauled down,

and afterward Fairford commanded that it be allowed to remain flying. The seamen had hardly gained the futtock shrouds when the cry, "Sail ho!" rang through the ship from half a dozen affrighted voices.

"Where away?" cried Berry.

"Right astern, sir, a large ship coming around the island, making up fast."

In the stress of the battle, no one had noticed the near approach of a heavy ship-of-the-line.

"What now, sir?" cried Berry, promptly.

"We must get away from that one if we can," answered Fairford, without a moment of hesitation.

"And leave Evelyn?" cried Margaret, frantically, "you cannot mean to abandon her on that sinking ship?"

Fairford sternly shook his head.

"If you love me," cried Margaret.

"I cannot," said Fairford, brokenly. "Duty . . . I must look first of all to my ship. Square away!" The helm was put up, and such sail as could be spread upon the Narragansett immediately gave her way through the water.

"Pray God," said Fairford, "that the spars hold, else we are lost. The English may delay by the prize and give us a chance to escape."

Even under the reduced sail which the weakened spars and the heavy wind permitted her to carry, the Narragansett showed her marvellous speed. They might still get away. After a time the pursuing ship overhauled the sinking frigate. As Fairford thought, the English ship hove to abreast of the wreck. She might yet be in time to rescue Evelyn and the rest. Fairford and Margaret and all the others with strain-

ing eyes watched her lower a boat in the heavy sea; but alas, before it reached the Undaunted, that gallant vessel, her colors still flying from the mast-head, plunged beneath the waves, and disappeared in its depths.

"See! She's gone," cried Fairford, in a hollow voice to the fainting girl at his side.

The gallant Ludlow with his smiling face, upon whom even in the midst of her despair Evelyn had found time to bestow a touch of pity — he had loved her; the little boy whose prize-money would go no more to his mother; the hundreds of other officers and men of both ships; the dead Heathcote himself, over whose head still fluttered the flag he had fought for, whose lips were still wet with the long kiss of farewell of the woman he had loved; that woman herself, standing erect to meet death by her lover's side, between the bodies of the dead, ringed about by the wounded, who stifled their groans as they looked upon her, undaunted and matchless, — all were gone! Friend and foe, gallant enemy, youthful lovers, sank in peace together into the deep. So it was over. The prophecy of her lighter moments had proven true, and Evelyn had ended her cruise under the British flag.

In the vast vortex made by the sinking ship, a few heads were seen and some men were picked up by the boat-party on the water. Of all the splendid fabric which had gone into action so magnificently that morning, of the heroic crew who had displayed all the gallantry of their nation, there were left only a few floating spars upon the ocean. There were one or two men in the English boat, and one or two upon

the Narragansett's deck as that ship desperately made her way northward. The cutter was soon hauled to the davits on the line-of-battle-ship and the latter filled away in pursuit again. Slowly she began to overhaul the hapless American with her load of dead and dying upon her deck. The pursuing Englishman set his foresail and main top-gallant sail at the same moment that the maintopmast of the Narragansett finally succumbed to the strain upon it. Then the liner ranged ahead across the pathway of the ship.

A broken thirty-six after the desperate victory already won that morning, could make no fight against a new ninety gun ship-of-the-line; with his own hand, to save any one else the humiliation, Fairford slowly lowered his flag. As the colors struck the deck, old Rhodes with a deep groan snapped his cutlass across his knee and threw the pieces overboard. Another boat from the liner was brought alongside after successful though difficult manœuvring in the heavy sea, and several men clambered aboard.

"What ship is this?" said the officer at the head, advancing toward Fairford, and at once removing his hat at the sight of Margaret clinging to her lover's arm.

"The United States Ship Narragansett, which I have the honor to command. What ship is that one?"

"His Britannic Majesty's Ship Poictiers, Captain Edward Lascelles, flying the flag of Vice Admiral Hardy. Thinking you might need them, we have brought two surgeons and a surgeon's mate with us to help you. Heavens! how cut up you are! What ship was that you fought with? Both men we got

in the water were too badly wounded to give any coherent account of themselves."

"That was formerly His Britannic Majesty's Ship Undaunted, prize to this ship when you came up," said Fairford, proudly.

"Prize, sir? We noticed that she went down with her colors flying."

"Ay, sir, she was allowed to fly them by my direction."

"Why that, sir?"

"Because," answered Fairford, slowly, "her captain was my brother."

"Your brother! Then you are . . ."

"Captain Blakely Fairford, at your service."

"Great God! only to think of it!" said the appalled lieutenant.

"Did you pick up a woman with your little boat, sir?" said Margaret, faintly.

"No, madam," said the officer, in great surprise, "was there a woman on board?"

The limp figure which sank to the deck at his feet told Fairford that the strain had at last proved too much for Margaret. When they had succeeded in reviving her, he carried her down into the Englishman's boat and they were rowed to the Poictiers. The gallant old admiral refused to take his sword, and showed to him and the rest of the crew the same attentions which under similar circumstances had been so thoughtfully bestowed by the Americans upon the English whom they had captured.

As Fairford and Margaret stepped upon the deck of the Poictiers the young captain turned and looked back upon his ship. As he gazed upon her, the stops

of a ball of bunting which had been slowly hoisted to the gaff were broken, and there above his beautiful frigate fluttered the English flag. As far as they were concerned, the cruise of the Narragansett was over.

CHAPTER XLI

A Companion of Nelson

THE great English admiral treated the captives with the utmost consideration. He set apart a stateroom in his own cabin for the use of Margaret, and another was allotted to Fairford, who was immediately placed under the care of a surgeon, and it was not until the following day that he was permitted to rise from his berth. During the rest of the day and the night following, the Poictiers stood by the prize, which was found to be practically unharmed in the hull, though frightfully cut up aloft, until the jury masts had been rigged, rigging spliced, and other preparations made for the long voyage to England. Throwing a heavy prize crew on board of her, the line-of-battle-ship squared away for home, the next morning, leaving the captured frigate to make the best of her way there alone under the small sail which she could now carry, which by the way she did in safety. That night the admiral, the captain of the ship, Fairford, and Margaret dined together in the great cabin, when the eventful story of the cruise was told.

"I understood you to say," said the admiral, "that you had captured your ship from the English, yet as I observed her closely, I could have sworn her lines were American rather than English."

"So they are, sir," said Fairford, smiling. "The fact is, we built her at Washington, launched her and rigged her and then provisioned her for a long cruise, for which she was all ready with the exception of a crew, when Ross and Cockburn with your men came along and captured Washington. . . ."

"Ah!" said the admiral, "that's a piece of news that we have not heard."

"And burnt it as well."

"Burnt it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Vandalism, vandalism! I am surprised," muttered the admiral.

"An action like that is very bad policy," said the captain. "It serves no other purpose than to exasperate the people. They can easily build a new capital, but it takes blood to wipe out the shame and insult."

"Quite so," replied Fairford. "Well, at any rate, the Narragansett was captured and dropped down the Potomac to the Chesapeake under the command of a Captain Cunningham."

"Oh," said the admiral, "Henry Cunningham, a hard man, I know him slightly. How is it with him?"

"He is dead, sir," answered Fairford.

"Was he killed in the recapture?"

"No, sir. Three deserters from your Navy were on board the Narragansett when she was recaptured; one of them was an Englishman, he was hung. We found him swinging at the yard-arm the morning after we cut her out. The other two, a father and his son . . ." Fairford hesitated, not liking to offend the generous old admiral.

"Out with it, lad; speak the truth without fear or favor, and never mind me."

"Well, sir, they were Americans, and they were sentenced to three hundred and one hundred and fifty lashes respectively. When he was released from the gratings, the old man, who had been punished first, seized Cunningham before any one could stop him and went overboard with him in his arms. Neither of them ever rose to the surface."

"Great Powers!" said the admiral, staring, "you don't mean to tell me that?"

"Yes, sir, just that. Evelyn Heathcote was aboard that ship at the time and heard it all," said Margaret.

"Pray, Miss Barrett, who is Evelyn Heathcote?" said Captain Lascelles.

"She was a distant relative and the betrothed of Captain Heathcote of the Undaunted. She who went down with the ship," answered Margaret, her eyes filling with tears.

"They were aboard the Narragansett when our boat party cut her out the night following the death of Captain Cunningham," explained Fairford.

"I am not a believer," said Admiral Hardy, "in flogging except in very extreme cases. The great Lord Nelson . . . we'll drink to him, Captain Fairford, if you have no objections . . ."

"Ay, sir," said Fairford, promptly, "with the greatest pleasure. Nowhere is the great seaman admired more than with us."

"Ay, he was a royal man," said old Hardy, sipping his glass thoughtfully; "we were shipmates on many a cruise, and stood shoulder to shoulder in many a desperate battle. He once saved me from a Spanish

prison at the risk of his ship, as possibly you may have heard. He had his faults, perhaps I should say, his one fault, but in spite of that, I humbly trust I do no wrong in hoping that I may be found fit to stand beside him again when I have slipped my cable for the eternal cruise beyond. He did not approve of flogging except in the extremest cases, and I learned my seamanship and discipline in his school."

Margaret, who was sitting next to the admiral, impulsively caught his hand, which was lying upon the table, and pressed it with both her own.

"Ah, Miss Barrett, that pleases you, I see."

"It pleases every one, sir," said Fairford.

"I hope to see the day," said the admiral, "when it will be abolished in every service. Pray proceed with your narrative, Captain Fairford."

"Well, sir, about sixteen knots below where we cut her out, lay a cluster of islands behind which I determined to seek shelter for a few hours in order to discharge my prisoners, and let the two pursuing ships get on ahead of me, so that when I ran down for the ocean in the morning, I could have all my foes in front."

"That's a desire of the Anglo-Saxon, I believe," remarked the captain.

"In order to bring my ship safely through the pass between the islands and the mainland, it was necessary to have a light on a certain point on the mainland. I had sent a messenger on to Colonel Barrett, the father of Miss Barrett here, to get a horse and ride through the woods and display the beacon. The man met with some accident . . . "

"He was shot," said Margaret, "by a British picket."

"But he managed to crawl up to the house and tell the story," said Fairford; "the colonel was ill, the man had been delayed, the hour was late, and there was no one to go but his daughter . . . "

"What!" cried the admiral, in astonishment.

"Impossible!" ejaculated the captain.

"Yes, gentlemen, this young lady. She rode that fifteen miles in a terrific storm entirely unaccompanied, breaking through a picket party at the bridge, losing her horse from a chance shot from them, and ran on alone and lighted the beacon. The men I sent ashore found her senseless on the rock and brought her aboard. We succeeded in breaking through the ships at the mouth of the bay by running over a picket boat, got to sea, and picked up a crew from a captured prize. We got some officers from the Constitution, with which we were fortunate enough to fall in, headed for the southward, and did n't sight a sail until we passed by an English fleet several days since."

"Yes," said the admiral, "my fleet. I sent them on ahead, being detained at Cape Town myself."

"When we flew our colors in passing them, the three frigates all signalled the flagship for leave to pursue, and the Undaunted received the desired permission. We ran along side by side to the southward for two days, until the storm abated sufficiently, and then rounded to under the lee of Tristan da Cunha and had it out."

"Did you know it was your brother's ship?"

"I did, sir. You know I had your signal book

and your Navy list as well. I would have preferred any other ship," said Fairford, "to that, but my duty, sir . . ."

"I know, I know," said the admiral, mournfully, "duty has no respect for family relationships."

"When we had captured the Undaunted, after a desperate hand-to-hand fight on her own decks, prior to which my brother had been mortally wounded while attempting to board us, Miss Heathcote learned that my brother, to whom she was betrothed, was in command and wounded, whereupon she immediately came aboard. When I returned to my own ship, intending to make arrangements for the transfer of the wounded, she remained with her lover. You were sighted immediately, and I felt it my duty to attempt to preserve my ship, so we sailed away and left them, and they went down together."

"Gentlemen," said the admiral, solemnly rising, "I wish to give you a toast. Drink with me to the two bravest women I know of. To the eternal memory of Mistress Evelyn Heathcote, who chose to go down with her lover in his ruined ship rather than live without him, and the living presence of Mistress Margaret Barrett, for whose courage and hardihood in taking that ride her country should be ever grateful. God bless me, my little miss," said the admiral, with moist eyes, and laying his hand upon her shoulder, "you are worthy to have been the bride of a Nelson."

"Instead of which, admiral," said Fairford, quietly, "she has agreed to try to be content with me."

"Sir, you are a lucky sailor, but, Miss Barrett, you will not find it a difficult task, I am sure, for your hus-

band will certainly take his place among the great captains of your country, Hull, Decatur, and Bainbridge, and the others whom this war has introduced to us. What are your purposes for England, Captain Fairford?"

"They depend largely upon your pleasure, sir."

"My pleasure is to have you paroled at once, and left at liberty until you are properly exchanged; and if Mistress Barrett will be graciously pleased to accept the hospitality of Lady Hardy and myself in the mean time, and you also, we shall indeed feel honored. In any event pray make use of my purse as your own," said the kind and generous admiral.

"In that case, sir, I shall feel it my duty to visit my mother at once. You know how I came to be related to Richard Heathcote, sir?"

"Yes," said the admiral, "I have heard the story. It is known all through the service that poor Heathcote has an American brother in your Navy."

"I have not seen her for many years, and I feel that the awful duty of telling her of the death of her husband and son has devolved upon me. I shrink from it, but it must be done."

"I would rather fight a battle than do it myself," said Hardy, thoughtfully, "but duty, you know, my lad . . ."

Ah, duty, how many sacrifices are exacted from us in thy inexorable name.

Book VI

THE PRIDE OF THE FITZHUGHS IS BROKEN

CHAPTER XLII

Their Wedding Journey

IT had been snowing for several days previously, and as far as the eye could see on this Christmas morning, the earth was enwrapped in its mantle of white. A chaise and pair coming along the old road found progression difficult indeed, and it was with a great sigh of relief that the post boy drew rein before the door of the inn. The little village of Heathcote, nestling snugly in the valley, consisted of one long street with the inn at one end, and the Church at the other. Upon a gentle hill overlooking the hamlet and the valley as well, rose the gray weather-darkened towers of Heathcote Hall, showing plainly through the snow-laden branches of the mighty beech-trees which surrounded it. The villagers were already at work clearing the paths in front of their doors in the early morning, when the chaise drew up before the inn.

A tall handsome man of military bearing, though clad in civilian dress and wrapped in a long paletot, sprang to the ground, and stretching out his arms tenderly lifted from the vehicle a slender little figure wrapped in bundles of fur. He did not deposit her upon the snow-covered earth, but carried her past the astonished hostler, who had come bustling forth in obedience to the post boy's signal, and who was

rewarded by a glimpse of a ravishingly beautiful face from beneath the large bonnet which she wore, and stood her down within the doorway of the inn. He seized a kiss while he held her, like Mahomet's coffin, suspended in the air 'twixt heaven and earth, before he allowed her dainty feet to touch the floor.

"Up in the air like that, Blake, I must admit that you are master, I feel so little and helpless when you take me up in that way; but when I am on terra firma again, conditions are reversed, sir. Don't dare to kiss me again without my permission. That's the five hundredth time this morning."

"Didn't you promise to obey me the other day in the chapel at Admiral Hardy's house when we were married, dearest?"

"Did I?" said Margaret, in great surprise. "The fact is I was so agitated then that I scarce recall what I said."

"At any rate, do you mean to tell me that you will not obey any command that I might give you, instanter?"

"Of course I will not. You are to obey me, absolutely, entirely, unquestionably . . ." cried Margaret.

"Can I furnish you with an adverb, madam, to help you out?" cried Fairford, bending forward again, when he was interrupted by the belated landlord, who, through a singular remissness on the part of the household, had not been notified of their advent until this moment. He came forward zealously intent upon repairing his lack of welcome, with loquacity, if nothing else.

"Good morning to your honor," he said, rubbing his hands and bowing obsequiously, "and the young

lady as well, sir. I hope I see you both well, sir, though there's no need to ask such a fine looking couple that question. Step this way into the parlor where there's a fire, and a Merry Christmas to you both, sir, being it's Christmas morning."

"Thank you, my good man," returned Fairford, as, preceded by his wife, he stepped into a cosy low-ceiled parlor, fitted with comfortable old fashioned furniture, and with a bright wood fire blazing and crackling upon the hearth. "We have been travelling since very early this morning from the last posting station, in order to get here in time for Christmas service. I suppose there will be one at the Church I saw yonder?"

"Yes, sir, oh certainly, sir, at half past ten o'clock. Lady Anne's most particular about it, and the vicar too," replied the man.

"That's well. Meanwhile, my wife has had nothing to eat, nothing but a cup of tea that is, and we would like some breakfast at once. Can you serve us something here?"

"Of course, sir, anything your honor pleases."

"Well, bring us something good and substantial,' said Margaret, smiling, "and good master landlord, do bring it quickly, please, my husband and I are famishing."

"Oh, never mind on my account, landlord, but my wife must have something at once."

"I think you will find that my husband will eat his share," returned Margaret at once. The way they lingered upon the two hymeneal titles inevitably betrayed them.

"Lord bless you, sir, and the young lady too, I

will have you something good here in the twinkling of an eye, enough for a dozen of you, and my wife's the best cook in these parts of Surrey if I do say so myself," replied the landlord, beaming complacently on the two a moment, and then bowing himself out of the room.

"Maria," said he to his wife, "hurry and set out the best breakfast you can for them two young things in the best parlor. They're mortal cold, and hungry as hunters. They haven't had no breakfast this morning. They're bride and groom, I think. It's 'husband' and 'wife' 'twixt them with every other word."

Left alone, Fairford hastily threw aside his own heavy cloak, then fumbled among the buttons and bundles and straps of his wife's bonnet and cloak with blundering masculine fingers — she could have doffed it herself in half the time, but she waited patiently for him, it was such a pleasure to both of them — until he gently lifted it from her shoulders; then he knelt down before her and drew the warm fur boots from her daintily shod little feet, upon which he pressed a kiss before he released them, and finally sat down on the great settle near the fire and drew his small wife upon his knee.

"This is delicious, Blake," she said, as she dropped her head upon his shoulder, and nestled close to him. "We have been married five days now, and it's nicer every day. I wonder if it's going to be like this after five whole years, and grow nicer all the time. I shall not be able to stand it if it does, I am sure. No, not again," she said firmly, as he put his hand beneath her chin and lifted her face up to his,

"there's a limit to everything, enough is enough. . . . Oh, you inexorable sailor," she murmured, kicking him with her little heels after the performance was over, "you really are incorrigible. If you do it again, I shall certainly get down."

"Margaret," he said, "I feel as if I could never let you out of my arms now that I have at last got you there. No, there is no use of your struggling. That's not the way to rule, my lady; but if you only look at me seriously with your great big gray eyes, I am your slave. When I look back on the cruise," he continued, playing with her slender fingers, which lay confidingly in his hand, "and the horror of it, the loss of the ship, the death of Ludlow and Dick and Evelyn, and all the rest, things seem to fade away, and I see only you before me. It seems as if all my striving had been for you anyway. Did I ever have any other aspiration, I wonder? You are the end of my desire and the object of my ambition, and to be able to call you wife, in spite of whatever else may happen, satisfies me with life."

"What a little thing satisfies you then, Blake," she answered demurely. "Look at me. You don't know how small I used to feel on the ship when I saw you so big and masterful and handsome, standing in the rigging and giving orders and directing your men. Do you remember the day you ran the schooner down, when our lives were in your hand . . . and you in God's?" she added solemnly.

"Of course, did you love me then? When did you begin to love me?" he asked for the thousandth time.

"Blake, I have told you that every day over and

over again since I married you. What a wretched memory you have, poor boy! I don't know when I began, but I realized it fully the night you told me you loved me in the summer house at home."

"Ah, yes," he said smiling, "the night you behaved so badly."

"Now, Blake, dear, I always behaved beautifully, did n't I?" she asked in sweet appeal, taking his face between her hands and looking at him with her great gray eyes, violet black this morning.

"Of course, of course, you always did," he answered, rapturously thrilling under her unwonted caress.

"Very well," she cried triumphantly, not withholding his reward for complaisance. "Now tell me when did you begin to love me, sir?"

"When was I born," he answered promptly.

"But that was several years before I was, Blake," she answered in dismay.

"Well, I loved you as an ideal then."

"A baby's ideal!" she said laughing.

"A baby's, a youth's, a man's, a life's ideal, Margaret," he said, lifting her hand to his lips with the reverence of an ancient cavalier, while she sprang to her feet at the sound of footsteps, followed by a most discreet knock upon the hall door.

After a reasonable interval, the door was opened and gave entrance to the experienced landlord — catch him breaking in upon a bride and groom, he knew his business, yes, sir — his wife and a maid, with the breakfast, which was soon laid upon the snowy cloth which had been drawn over a table placed before the cheerful fire. After serving them,

the landlord and his wife discreetly withdrew and they were left alone again. They were very much in love with each other, but they were at the same time young, and their morning ride had given them a keen appetite, on account of which the generous provision of the English inn suffered severely.

"How good it is to see you eat, dearest," said Fairford, fatuously.

"Well, I was so hungry. It is not at all romantic, I know, but I was almost starved. But you are not eating anything yourself, Blake."

"I cannot, I have not had time, been so busy helping you, you see."

"Nonsense," she cried, "if you don't begin at once, I shall stop immediately and starve myself to death. What are you going to do after breakfast?"

"It will be nearly Church time then, and I believe that I should like to go to Church as we had planned. It's Christmas Day, you know, and we can take Communion for the first time as man and wife, together, you know."

"That will be sweet and right," said Margaret, gravely.

"And then I shall probably have an opportunity of seeing Lady Anne, my mother, that is, before we call at the Hall later on."

"How strange it sounds to hear you speak of your mother," said Margaret. "You know I have never had one either. My mother died when I was a little baby."

"Yes, I know, and I do not feel as if I had one, much more of a one than you have, dearest, because I have not seen Lady Anne since I was a little boy."

"Why do you call her Lady Anne in that formal manner, Blake?"

"I do not know why; nervousness, or timidity, or unfamiliarity, — I cannot tell. I have always called her mother in my heart, you know. I have always cherished and loved the idea I have formed of her from her picture and my few boyish recollections; I have been wild to see her, and yet, now that I am here I shrink from meeting her, not only on account of the dreadful tidings of which I am the bearer — her husband and son both dead, and in a measure through me — but you know how one feels when confronted with the reality which he has idealized."

"Did you idealize me, dear?" said Margaret, wistfully.

"Yes," he answered promptly, "of course."

"And when you realized me — "

"Found you far beyond my fondest dreams even."

"Well, perhaps it will be that way with your mother, Blake."

"I fear not," he said sadly; "things like that do not come twice in a lifetime to the same man."

"Well, whatever happens," said Margaret, "you will have me."

"Yes," said Fairford, "and that more than contents me."

CHAPTER XLIII

Passed by, as the Idle Wind

THE sun was shining brilliantly over the snowy world, and its dazzling light was reflected from every fantastic crystal lying undisturbed in the still air of the winter morning. The Lady Anne — she would not permit any one to call her Lady Heathcote, which savored too much of lost individuality to please her — took great pride in never neglecting her religious duties under any circumstances, as she took pride in everything else which she did. As the bells were carolling their sweet invitation for service, she descended the stairs in the wide old hall, in great state and passed through the formal line of servants, escorted by the deferential steward, who managed her affairs (under her directions, be it noted) in the absence of her husband and son.

She stepped out into the air and down the broad steps of the terrace, which had been swept clean of its load of snow by her dependent vassals, deposited her regal self alone in her carriage, and majestically drove down the hill to participate in the worship of God, in the village Church of which she was at once the stay and patron.

Something of the pride of that aristocratic gentleman of France who remarked that, "God would certainly think twice before damning a gentleman

of his quality," frequently formed a portion of the burden of Lady Anne's thoughts; although for the sake of example, *noblesse oblige*, and from a deep sense of what was due from her to the small world over which she ruled in the way of inspiration, she neglected nothing that could impress weaker and more necessitous humanity with the propriety of being respectably religious.

As she descended from the carriage which drew up before the lych-gate of the Church, among the crowd of humble dependants clustered about she noticed two strangers coming toward her from the direction of the village street: a gentleman, and the person clinging to his arm, a lady, of that there was no doubt in her mind. Visitors of that stamp and at that season were unusual in the village, to say the least, and if vulgar curiosity had ever a lodgment in so stately a bosom as Lady Anne's it might have found an opening then. With the condescension which the lord of the manor might have bestowed upon a faithful retainer in the days of the lamented past, she slightly inclined her head toward them; to which gracious salutation the gentleman responded by removing his hat with a deep bow, the lady at the same time dropping his arm and making a profound courtesy.

"I feel like an outcast," whispered Fairford, bitterly to his wife.

"And I like a frightened child," said Margaret, as her ladyship passed on, followed by the waiting villagers.

"Very proper manners," thought Lady Anne, as she preceded them majestically through the gate and

up toward the Church. "A most personable young man and quite a pretty young girl. They look like people I have known somewhere, who can they be?" she thought vaguely.

It might have seemed strange that Lady Anne did not recognize her son, but the mental demands of her station were so great, she was so self centred, and her eyes, except in the case of one person, were turned so continually inward, that no one in the outside world made a very deep impression upon her personality, with the exception noted, no one in any world in fact, unless it was herself.

She would have known herself could she have been projected before her own vision, instantly, at least she thought so, and for Lady Anne to think a thing invariably established a fact. Besides, it was twenty years and more since she had seen her son, her elder son that is, and she had meanwhile received no picture of him. His father, the son of the tradesman aforesaid, had entirely faded out of her recollection.

Still there was something, an instinct maternal perhaps, a feeling which gave her inexplicable uneasiness and unrest at the mere thought of the presence of the strangers. She found it difficult to fix her attention upon the service, which the simple village choir rendered with a fervor and sweetness suited to the day and hour, until the good old vicar gave out his text: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

As the good old minister went on to describe the simplicity of that mighty birth; as he told of the arrival in the crowded village of the two humble

descendants of King David; of their forced recourse for an abiding place to one of the caves in the hill back of the inn, sometimes used for a granary, sometimes for the stabling of cattle; as he spoke of the bundles of straw and the sacks of grain lying on the floor; of the walls cut in rude mangers, low enough for the sheep to eat from, he attracted her attention.

"There," said he, "is the place of the Incarnation. There that night in the still darkness, in that rude place of shelter, with those meagre, humble appointments, think of it, women of to-day, the climax in the life of that woman, of every woman is reached, she becomes a mother. With all the prophesied anguish, with all the exquisite pain which only womanhood may feel, a child is born. There is a great, white, radiant star in the heavens, and I think the day must be breaking when Christ is born."

The birth of the Son! What must it have been to that mother, what is it to every mother, she thought. As the preacher's words fell upon her ear, she seized his present thought and heeded not the rest of the sermon. She remembered her own son — alas, even in this hour, she recalled but one — that gallant boy, that bold sailor so far away on his ship, well named because it was like its master, Undaunted. She sat through the rest of the service as in a dream, her mind and her heart far away upon the sea, that great ocean not deeper than her love, with the child of her old age, as is the wont of mothers.

And back in the corner of the Church, Fairford eagerly watched the white-headed old woman, this mother who had passed him by unheeding, with a

strange hunger and sadness of the heart which not even the tender sympathy of his wife, who divined all that was passing in his soul, could alleviate or assuage. He had dreamed of this meeting during many a night watch, all the years of his youth even, and lo, now that he had seen her at last, he was to her as a stranger and she knew him not. He could not understand it.

How could a mother forget the child she had borne, that had lain in her bosom, that had tugged at her breast, around whose neck had been clasped the baby hands? Ah, Lady Anne, Lady Anne, how could you so fail to remember? Was there no charm in the very presence of your son which could recall the past, the days of youth and life in that far land where first you saw the light?

Fairford knelt between the two women he loved — his wife and his mother — at the communion rail, and his mother made no sign. He stood in the Church porch as she passed by, looking eagerly, wistfully upon her, and no voice from heaven whispered to her proud old heart, —

"This is indeed thy son!"

CHAPTER XLIV

"Woman, behold thy Son!"

LADY ANNE did not have a very pleasant journey from the Church to the Hall. Her mind reverted to and still dwelt upon her absent son, with a side thought or two for Sir James, whom she regarded somewhat in the light of a necessary domestic appanage, and from whom she had not heard for nearly a year; but in her various cogitations, the face of the stranger of the morning would obtrude itself. It was most provoking.

She felt that her life had become suddenly, to her great discomfort, intertwined with him in some mysterious way, and it was with a very decided feeling of uneasiness that she entered her home. Divesting herself of her winter wrappings, she sat down in the library while waiting for dinner, to consider the situation over a biscuit and a glass of wine. A sense of dependence was both unusual and annoying to Lady Anne, and she scarcely knew how adequately to grapple with it.

The advent of a servant who brought a message, "a lady and gentleman from America to see your ladyship," filled her with a deep sense of relief. She hated mysteries, and the solution of the mysterious and puzzling personality of the stranger would probably now be given her.

"Show them up, James," she said condescendingly, condescension being her favorite attitude toward humanity in general whether of high or low degree.

Margaret and Fairford had walked up to the Hall after service. Fairford had formed no plan as to how he was to communicate his sad tidings and his identity to his mother, and trusted to the inspiration of the coming moment to direct him in the best way. When the door of the library was thrown open, and the footman announced the advent of the "gentleman and lady from America," his first impulse, which had been to run toward her, was checked by the ceremonious dignity with which she rose from her chair.

"Sir and madam," she said in her stateliest manner, "whom have I the privilege of welcoming to Heathcote?"

"My name is — is Johnson, madam," replied Fairford, "and this lady is my wife" — for the life of him he could not tell her who he was then; "we are from Virginia."

"Ah, are you one of the Annandale Johnstones, sir?" asked Lady Anne, with rising interest. Perhaps she had seen these persons years ago in Virginia, her mind reverting to a certain family which had attained nearly to the exalted attitude of the Fitzhugh dignity, and with members of which she had been intimate in her girlhood.

"Unfortunately, no, madam," replied Fairford, at which her evanescent interest in that direction vanished again, "but we have business with your ladyship. In short, I am a messenger."

"Pray be seated, sir, and your wife also; she looks tired. Let me hand you a glass of wine, madam."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Margaret, promptly, not desirous of accepting any hospitality in the present indeterminate condition of affairs, "but just now I need nothing."

As the three sat down, the Lady Anne's face happened to be in the full light from the window, while Fairford unconsciously had turned his back to them and was in the deep shadow with Margaret by his side. Lady Anne was fighting down an inward feeling of perturbation and anxiety. Nature and pride were beginning a battle royal within her bosom.

"What and from whom is your message, sir?" she said.

"I regret, madam, that the news I bring is not good," he replied evasively, at which she started.

"You come from Sir James, I presume. I trust he is well. You saw him lately?"

"About three months since, madam."

"And did he send the message?"

"Sir James, I fear —"

"What is it, sir? Speak," she cried imperiously.

"He will send you no more messages, Lady Anne," answered Fairford, gently.

The proud old face turned a shade whiter and the small, graceful hands tightly closed themselves around the arms of the great chair in which she sat; she looked steadfastly out through the uncurtained window across the white fields of the ancient heritage of the Heathcotes, which from to-day would bow before a younger master.

Sir James was gone, the gentle husband of her bygone years. She loved him in her strange way, she had not understood how much, until this blasting

shock had come upon her. How had it happened, how could it be? With a sense of having been slighted by fate, she dropped her head upon her hands and moaned softly.

She felt the shock keenly, but age, his absence, her pride, and the whole engrossing thought of her heart came to her rescue; she had ever repressed her feelings, it had been the pride of her house to be stricken and not cry out, to die and make no sign, and she finally faced her son again with the calmness of an ancient Roman.

"How was it, sir?" she questioned softly.

Briefly he recounted the circumstances of her husband's death.

"How do you know this, sir?" she asked.

"Madam, I am an officer in the American Navy, I commanded the ship."

"I have a son who is a naval officer," she resumed, in great agitation; "he was at the Cape of Good Hope when I last heard from him, in command of the frigate Undaunted; he loved his father dearly, and now he will be Sir Richard, poor boy. And Evelyn Heathcote, Sir James' young kinswoman, what of her? I trust she is well."

"Alas, no, madam," replied Fairford, bitterly, the evidence of her own lips that she had apparently forgotten him, that she did not recall that she had two sons in the naval service, rankling in his soul, "she too—"

"What, sir," cried the old woman, trembling in spite of her efforts at repression at this new shock, "Was she killed at the same time?"

"No, madam, she was unharmed at that period of

the cruise, but later on the ship which I commanded fell in with an English frigate off the Island of Tristan da Cunha — "

"Pray, where may that be, sir?" she interrupted him, striving to gain time.

"On the way from Virginia to the Cape of Good Hope, madam."

"Yes, yes, go on," said Lady Anne, a vague terror clutching at her heart at this ominous suggestion, though she gave no other sign of her inward suspense than was afforded by the trembling, which she vainly endeavored to suppress, as before. Fairford's heart went out to her in pity. He would have given all he possessed, except Margaret, to have been the bearer of happier tidings.

"Well, madam, in the action which ensued with the English ship, Miss Heathcote — "

"I understand you, sir, she was killed. Poor girl, poor girl, she was a good child, and a beautiful one; poor Sir James was very fond of her, and I as well, and Richard too. I sometimes thought he loved her; it will be an added shock to him. She was almost like a daughter to me, although, of course, not a Fitzhugh. What was the manner of her death, pray tell me, sir?" The old eyes were full of tears now.

Rapidly Fairford told the story of the battle, the coming together of the two ships, the fierce mêlée on the forecastle, the capture of the ship, the wounded and dying English captain.

"Miss Heathcote, who had been below with my wife during the combat, had learned accidentally that the English ship had been commanded by — by — an acquaintance of hers."

Lady Anne sprang to her feet, her hands clasped over her heart, wild interrogation in her eyes. Fairford had spoken hurriedly as if to postpone the inevitable question.

"She came over to the captured and sinking ship and recognized her friend, who was severely wounded, dying in fact; the ships parted in the heavy sea, we were driven away by the approach of a large English ship of war, and subsequently captured; meanwhile the frigate with which we had fought sank with Evelyn and the captain, and they with all on board of her were lost."

As Lady Anne sprang to her feet, Fairford and Margaret had risen also. There was dead silence in the room. Nature and pride were fighting a desperate battle in the breast of this Fitzhugh, and this time the struggle was one which transcended all her experience.

"You are keeping something back. What was the name of the English ship? Who was her captain?" she cried hoarsely.

Margaret sprang to her side, but the indomitable old woman waved her away.

"I need no support, madam, the Fitzhughs have ever stood alone. The name, sir? For God's sake, the name?" Her tense voice was fraught with terror and despair.

"The frigate Undaunted," answered Fairford, hoarsely, "Captain Richard Heathcote."

The Lady Anne, as if stricken dead, stared straight before her, out across the white fields again, and they were not whiter than her face, those ancient lands of the Heathcotes which would know still

another master. She grew suddenly old before their watching eyes. Presently a frightful smile wreathed her thin lips. Her hands tightened fiercely about her stricken heart.

"My boy, my boy!" she murmured softly, and then with a little sigh, she sank forward into the arms of her unknown son. Placing her upon the low chair, Margaret chafed her hands, while Fairford rang the bell furiously. Restoratives were brought, and presently she opened her eyes with returning consciousness. When her glance comprehended the people in the room, she dismissed the servants, and sitting up turned to Fairford again.

"I believe I must have fainted," she said with faltering voice, "though it is not my habit to do so. You must excuse the unwonted weakness; my race was ever strong. You had news for me, sir. You were telling me about my son, I think. He . . . O God, my son! I have no son."

Fairford stayed the words that were breaking from Margaret's lips, with a quick glance — not yet, a little longer. Lady Anne continued to speak in a low repressed tone, almost a whisper, terrible to hear.

"He is gone, killed in this cruel war, sunk beneath the depths of the sea. May the curse of God fall upon all who brought it about! It was your ship, sir, you told me, that struck him down. How dared you come here with this message? Dead, and I not there. Gone without a word, a touch. Childless, childless! Oh, my God, hear me! May you live, sir, to feel the heartbreak you have caused a broken mother, who had but one dream in life . . . her

child. May you die in battle alone, craving a wife's kiss . . . a mother's love! How could you do it, how could you do it, ruthless, murderous! . . ."

She could not see in the wild blindness of her agony that Fairford's face was even whiter than her own. His lips trembled, great beads of sweat bedewed his forehead, as she turned upon him in her passion.

"May you lack in your dying day a mother's blessing, as now I give you a mother's . . ."

He lifted his hand as if to ward off a blow.

"Stop," cried Margaret. "This is also your son."

A wild cry rang through the room.

"Fairford . . . Blakely! It's true. How was I so blinded?"

"My mother," cried Fairford, piteously, stepping toward her and reaching out his arms again, but she shrank from him, averting her head.

"Your brother's blood is on your hands," she cried, shuddering. Fairford dropped his arms and turned away in helpless despair.

"Hush, Oh cruel mother," cried Margaret, all afire to defend her stricken husband. "Do you realize what you say? It was in honorable warfare, in open battle, in the pursuance of duty stern and inexorable, that this awful thing occurred. Once in my father's house the son who stands before you held his brother in deadly conflict unarmed and defenceless before him, and because he looked at him with his mother's eyes, he stayed his hand and spared his life. In that very battle in which you lost a son, and we a friend and brother, he would have given anything to save him. . . ."

"Yes, yes, all I possessed to spare you this," groaned Fairford.

"He loved his brother as he loved you. If there be a God in Heaven, unsay your awful words. Look! This is the son who has been deprived of his mother's care, and his mother's presence, and his mother's love since he was a child; this was a boy who dreamed about a gracious lady who left him; who built for himself an ideal out of his childhood's memory and pictured faces; who dreamed of a mother before whom he poured all the love of his heart; and as the years glided by, the love grew stronger and the dream deeper, until it is to-day shattered and broken, and by you, cruel woman that you are. . . . Look upon him, look upon him. I say, you shall, you must," said Margaret, strong in her resolution as she seized Lady Anne and insistently turned her head to look at Fairford, crying at the same time with an unconscious memory of another awful moment, —

"Woman, behold thy son!"

Fairford sprang forward and fell at Lady Anne's feet, catching her dress in his hand.

"My mother, my mother," he sobbed, "have you no room in your heart for me?" There was a little silence. She forced herself to look upon him; days of youth came back to her, about her wretched heart another memory was twining. Slowly he made a way into her affection as she gazed upon him. He found, in a measure, the long craved place in her heart at last, and, with a cry, she bent toward him.

"My son, my son . . . you are indeed my son

. . . I am an old and broken woman . . . forgive me," she murmured, as he clasped her to his heart. Margaret turned and walked toward the window. They were alone together. And the pride of the Fitzhughs was broken at last.

EPILOGUE

SHORTLY after the meeting between mother and son, when the news of the signing of the Treaty of Peace between the contending nations was declared, Fairford and his wife bade good-bye to their new friend, the kind old Admiral Hardy, and, accompanied by one Joseph Rhodes, an ancient mariner, who thereafter until he ended his days considered himself permanently attached to their household as chief boatswain's mate thereof, took Lady Anne, a feeble heart-broken old woman, across the sea with them to end her few remaining days in her native land of Virginia.

Things had gone on as of yore on Colonel Barrett's plantation, since Margaret rode out into the darkness that night and came not back; but that brave old soldier did not long survive the shock of Margaret's supposed death, and although the joy of her return gave him an evanescent strength, it was only a little while until he stood at attention one morning and answered "Present" to the final roll call of his Eternal Captain. Neither was Lady Anne called upon to mourn her misfortunes long. When she died, she left everything of which she was possessed to Margaret. There was one significant clause in her will, a direction which Fairford scrupulously carried out. She would be buried upon a high hill with her face

toward the lonely island where her best beloved slept beneath the sea.

Honors and rewards had been heaped upon Fairford, and prize money distributed to the surviving officers and crew of the Narragansett by a grateful country which rang with their heroic exploits. In the days of peace he saw much service with Captain Hull and his old companions in arms, commanding at one time the great Constitution, and at another being the commodore on the European station. Children clustered about his knee, and in twilight hours clamored for stories as children will. There was one tale of which they never tired, and that was the story of their mother's ride and their father's cruise, when, in the brave old days, they both fought

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